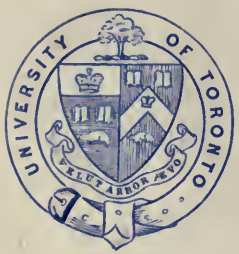
THE MONEY GOD

OR THE

EMPIRE AND THE PAPACY



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THE MONEY GOD;

OR,

THE EMPIRE AND THE PAPACY.

A

TALE OF THE THIRD CENTURY.

BY

(M.) A. Abel QUINTON,

Author of "Aurelia; or, The Jews of Capena Gate."

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5. 4. 49

BALTIMORE:
KELLY, PIET AND COMPANY,
174 and 176 Baltimore Street.
1873.

PS
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THE MONEY GOD;

OR,

THE EMPIRE AND THE PAPACY.

PART FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

A HAPPY MAN.

WE believe it had been difficult to have found a happier man than Furius Nomentanus Lupus at the moment we undertake to occupy ourselves with him. To judge of it, let the reader who wishes first cast with us a glance upon his splendid dwelling.

By itself it formed what is called an island "insula," because entirely isolated from every neighboring habitation, and situated exactly in an enclosure, towards which converged several public ways. This house had been constructed a few years before the period of our story, in the new quarter, on the side that certain upstarts had begun to seek, that is, the ancient Field of Mars which was to advance gradually and help form the Rome of our day.

Why, indeed, should not the mania of building, which generally seizes upon declining nations, make use of that vast space where the political and military life of the Roman people had ceased to exercise itself, and which the emperors, already for a number of years past, voluntarily exiled from Rome, no longer filled (except at rare intervals) with the solemn manifestation of warlike pomps?

Furius Nomentanus Lupus then had done as many others of his class. He had bought land in the now abandoned Field of Mars, bargaining for it at a low price, and had there erected the dwelling into which we are about to enter.

An old Roman accustomed to the smallness of the ancient habitations would have found it vast; but he would have smiled disdainfully at certain proofs of a parsimony not formerly known, and of bad taste displaying itself everywhere.

For instance, the "atrium," instead of being surrounded by columns of marble or jasper, with rich flutings and elegant Corinthian chapters, was constructed, throughout its whole extent, of simple wooden pillars. It is true, the architect, an artist of renown, had twisted them after the Oriental manner, and the encaustic painter had covered them with a brilliant coating, which pleased by the brightness of its colors and variety of its designs; but these less costly modes of decoration, mentioned by Pliny the Elder and Vitruvius,* were adopted only by those of recent fortune or doubtful station; during the last days of the Republic or first of the Empire, never would any one have thought of ornamenting a truly patrician dwelling in this manner.

The same economy, the same desire of pleasing only the eye, and of being content with appearance only instead of the opulent realities of the past, displayed itself in the brick pavement covering the floor of the "atrium" and rest of the house. An ingenious ostentation had chosen the shades of brick and varied the disposal of them, so that at first sight, the capricious evolution of lines and harmonious interlacing of angles was astonishing; but astonishment would soon give way to a smile at this attempted imitation of the effect of rich mosaics, or those magnificent assortments of different colored marble or red porphyry, such numerous and sumptuous specimens of which were offered by the houses of the Via Sacra or those of the antique Palatinate.

These vulgarities, then, abounded in the dwelling of Furius Nomentanus Lupus, and it would be tedious and fastidious to devote more time to an enumeration of them. From the rough reservoir of the basin which received the waters of the "impluvium," even to the least details of the interior decoration, all, without exception, betrayed the ridie-

* Pliny, Nat. Hist., xxx. 10. Vitruvius vii. 9.

ulous vanity of the master, aiming at elegance and grandeur, but endeavoring to reach them with the least possible outlay.

There were, nevertheless, two things justifying the epithet of splendid, which we ourselves have given to this habitation of order and ornament.

The first was the opinion of the multitude (to which we must always incline when not conflicting with conscience) transported with emulation before this false magnificence of opulence and bad taste. The second, much more real, could establish itself upon the immense quantity of truly beautiful furniture, rich and rare, encumbering rather than ornamenting the different parts of the house. Beds of sculptured ebony delicately incrusted with ivory or silver, high back softly cushioned chairs of various forms, tables of most precious wood, particularly of citron, so highly prized by amateurs, tripods of gilded bronze murrhine vases, cups and urns of all sizes, statues upon their pedestals, costly pictures —such were the principal objects that at once struck the astonished gaze of visitors.

Rolled up and suspended from the walls, or thrown negligently upon the ground, were rich Oriental carpets and fabrics of that long, fleecy wool celebrated by the gravest authors,* and adding, by the brilliancy of their colors and splendor of their reflections, to the effect of this collection of sumptuous things, accumulated in a disorder superior to art.

If the heavy covers of certain "thecae" or massive chests had been lifted, and the depths of their "armaria" or panels searched, many other treasures would have been displayed to eyes gleaming with avarice or stupified with admiration. Carefully enveloped in pieces of common linen, to preserve them from dust and dampness, stuffs of the finest wool, folded so as to prevent rumpling, presented a complete assortment of all the shades of purple, that color so precious, so dear to the Romans.

There was something to please every taste; bright purple for those who preferred it, purple with a dark or violet tinge for persons liking that better, and even for those, who more opulent, could pay at the rate of a thousand farthings per

* Varro, Ling. Lat. cap. v, 167—Cicero, Tusc., v, 21—Seneca, ep. 87.

pound (nearly eight hundred francs), that beautiful Syrian tint, like the color of congealed blood, but which in the light seemed irradiated with the most brilliant lustre. Other pieces of furniture contained, put away with the same care, those delicate fabrics well known to the women of our day, but which then were of a price so exorbitant, that they had been made the special object of several prohibitive sumptuary laws. We mean silk which Virgil, Pliny, and Martial* had extolled for a long time, but a complete garment of which Heliogabalus was the first among the Romans to wear.

We must, before closing this enumeration, add to it the interminable list of necklaces, rings, ear-rings, bracelets, diamonds, precious stones of every kind and form contained in the "capsulae" or boxes, and "scrinia" or caskets, the number of which was truly incredible; but as all these treasures, on account of their great value and fear of being stolen, were buried in the depths of coffers, "arcae" lined with bronze, plated with iron† and fastened in the walls of the least accessible parts of the house, to our regret, we are forced to leave them there under the triple bolts completing this formidable defence.

Perhaps, moreover, in the course of our story, we shall have occasion to refer to these riches again, and show their use.

At present, a simple detail, destined to cast a gleam of light upon the habitation we describe, will suffice to give an idea of its possessor's condition, and the real manner in which all these accumulated splendors were employed.

In front of the house, at the right and left of the "prothyrum" or vestibule, two persons, sometimes in the attitude of anxious watchfulness or that of ardent provocation, according to the physiognomy, condition, or appearance of those in the street passing within their reach, were sitting or standing in "tabernae" or booths, which were open from early morn till a late hour at night.

These individuals, called "institores tabernae" or overseers of trade, were but slaves in immediate subjection to

* Virgil, Georg., Lib. XI, vers. 121—Pliny, Nat. Hist., vi, 17—Martial Lib. xi. 28.

† See in the Dictionary of Roman and Greek Antiquities by Antony Rich, the picture of a chest discovered in the "atrium" of a house of Pompeii.

Furius Nomentanus Lupus, and their booths offered to the public samples of all the rare goods contained in the interior of the house.

All their industry was employed in soliciting passers-by to purchase the merchandise confided to their charge, for woe to them, if at the end of each day they did not remit to their avaricious and rigorous master an important sum, the amount of which he himself had determined.

Very often, in the silence of the night, were heard afar, piercing cries, issuing from the thick walls of this house, groans sent forth by the unhappy "institores," who, under the lash of vigorous "lorarii," * paid the penalty their purchasers' penury or want of liberality had caused them to undergo.

There was, nevertheless, a means of freeing themselves from all punishment when the day had been unpropitious, and even of redeeming in advance the deficiency of unprofitable operations. If an amateur, dissatisfied with the merchandise offered in the booths, or in search of certain costly objects, appeared hesitating between all those whims and fancies that every opulent person could allow himself to indulge in, if above all, this amateur was a matron of renown, in quest of trifles for her toilet, or jewels to add to those she already possessed, she was graciously invited to enter the house, where Furius Nomentanus Lupus, always present, charged himself personally with the conclusion of the affair, that is, with satisfying her caprices or whims.

The profit was then so great, that Furius Nomentanus Lupus could, indeed, for several days relax his rigor towards the unhappy beings who had been the cause of this good fortune.

Thus, as we have written at the head of this chapter, this man was happy. He was happy in the possession of so fine a dwelling filled with rare and costly articles—in his opulent commerce—in the enormous sums abounding in his coffers—and in other things of which we have not yet been able to speak.

Yes, he was happy in all that, and happy beyond expression, but he had been so only since yesterday.

*Slaves charged with chastising the others, ordinarily with leathern thongs (loramenta or lora), whence their name.

Twenty-four hours before, all this dazzling mirage could have been swept away with a breath, and Furius Nomentanus Lupus himself have been reduced to the condition of the young slave whose bare shoulders were, at that moment, being torn by repeated blows of the executioner's whip.

The cause of this chastisement was a vase of baked Cumes earth, which the awkward one had overturned, breaking the handle. The master presided at the punishment in person, and far from being touched by the heart-breaking cries, or sight of the blood flowing on all sides from the bruised body of the poor child, he appeared, on the contrary, to enjoy a vivid satisfaction, which incessantly manifested itself by rubbing his hands together, a gesture familiar to everybody in this happy frame of mind.

At last, as everything must have its measure and limits, Furius Nomentanus Lupus cried out:

"It is enough!"

The two executioners ceased immediately, and detached their victim from the post to which he had been tied. He fell fainting upon the ground. Then Furius Nomentanus Lupus called aloud, and by name, some other slaves, who instantly answered the summons.

"It is the hour for my mid-day nap," said he, in a threatening, angry tone. "I am going to take a little rest. You know that this evening Carpinatius and Ctesiphon are to sup with me. Have everything ready for the repast, and also my most beautiful festal robe. I wish to be awaiting my guests, even when they cross the threshold of this 'atrium.'"

After stopping a moment to read their countenances, and see if his orders had been well understood, he continued in a still more inflexible voice, and almost with an accent of fury:

"Wretches! bear in mind that since yesterday I belong to myself and you all to me, entirely to me! You have ceased to be my 'vicarii;' you are my slaves! You see this dog," added he, pushing with his foot the inanimate body of the child, "by my familiar genius, his punishment will appear sweet, beside those my justice will invent, if, hereafter, you do not obey me better than you have done. Go!"

Thus dismissed, the trembling crowd of slaves hastened to disappear, and Furius Nomentanus Lupus, lifting a cur-

tain, formed of some rich Asiatic fabric, entered his "dormitorium," or place of repose.

The child, torn by the thongs of the "lorarii," still lay in a swoon on the brick pavement.

Whilst Furius Nomentanus Lupus enjoys his nap, and we the anticipation of seeing his two guests, Carpinatius and Ctesiphon, let us enlighten ourselves on some points, that may have appeared obscure in the sketch we have just traced.

CHAPTER II.

CASTOR AND POLLUX.

CLAUDIUS the Goth, second of that name, died at Lumium of the plague, in the month of April, A. D. 270, after a somewhat glorious reign of little more than two years. Towards the end of his reign, just about a quarter of a century before the period in which we have shown Furius Nomentanus Lupus flourishing in the midst of his riches, there arrived at Rome, coming no one knew whence, a jockey or slave dealer, who soon acquired an extraordinary reputation.

This man, answering to the Greek name of Chaerestrate, fitted up not far from the Coliseum a considerable tavern, with scaffolds and whatever else was necessary, for carrying on his lucrative trade and selling his merchandise.

Chaerestrate brought to the market at Rome a numerous crowd of slaves of both sexes, admirably chosen, and matched, above all, for amateurs of great fortunes and capricious tastes. His assortment was composed exclusively of young boys and girls not yet grown, the boys about fourteen years of age, the girls twelve. We suspect Chaerestrate could have been ranged in that class of slave dealers called "plagiarii," that is, robbers or receivers of stolen children very often free, and whom they afterwards endeavored to sell as slaves, thus suppressing their civil state, and all traces which would have led to their recognition.

There was formerly an ancient law at Rome, the law of Fabia "de plagio," * which punished this crime with death, but it had doubtless become obsolete, for the Emperors Diocletian and Maximian, and afterwards the Emperor Constantine, had never exacted even a tithe of its rigor, and, moreover, we know there are persons who never perplex themselves with the best legislative enactments.

However that may be, in the number of little wretches that Chaerestrate, as soon as he had provided himself with lodgings, hastened to exhibit upon his scaffolds, the public, officious and anxious, had immediately remarked two children, aged at most seven or eight years, of a delicacy of form, elegance of movement, and principally of such striking resemblance in countenance, in every limb, and even in height, that it was truly incredible.

There was nothing from the roots of their hair, a most beautiful flaxen color, to the delicate extremities of their hands and feet—nothing which was not absolutely identical in these two children whose individuality, either birth or chance (for Chaerestrate would make no explanations upon this important point), had, we may say, almost confounded and destroyed.

Simply to distinguish one from the other, which otherwise had been impossible, and also for the sake of naming them, Chaerestrate had thrown around the neck of one a string of black beads, adding to the dazzling lustre of his skin, and had called him Castor.

The other very naturally received the name of Pollux.

At this period, so irreverently had they begun to treat the ancient divinities of Olympus, that these names applied by the slave dealer to two articles of his trade did not appear at all impious.

They corresponded moreover with the sentiments of the multitude who, every time Castor and Pollux were exhibited

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* Passed in the year of Rome, 665. This crime which comprehended equally the detention and sale of fugitive slaves, was made the object of a special legislation (quaestio de plagio) We know these "quaestio" or criminal judgments had been established for the suppression of certain crimes, to which end they were particularly directed. (See the xxviii. section de publicis udiciis in the fourth book of Justinianis Institutes, and especially upon the law of Fabia.)

Imp. Diocletian and Maximian, laws 6 and 7, from Code ad legem Fabiam de plagiariis.

Imp. Constantinus, law 16, from Code cod., tit.

upon the scaffold, were but firmly persuaded (perhaps they were not wrong) that before them stood twin brothers.

Nevertheless a mark, entirely moral, would, to an attentive observer, establish a great difference between the two, and this mark, which had its seat in the eyes (although both had eyes of exactly the same shade, deep blue), at certain moments seem to cross the face and reappear upon the lips. Thus, on noticing Castor, one would have been almost frightened at the restless mobility of his aspect, at his moving continually from right to left like a savage beast, and at the initiated, convulsive and disdainful smile upon his contracted mouth—whilst in the eyes of Pollux, on the contrary, was a profound calm, and upon his lips an expression of gentleness, with which his whole countenance was divinely illumined.

At the end of a few days nothing was talked of in Rome but Castor and Pollux, and an enormous crowd collected tumultuously before the slave merchant's tavern every time the two children appeared upon the platform.

When Chaerestrate was well convinced that the enthusiasm was at its height, he made known by a public crier, the day of his sale.

Castor and Pollux were to form but one bid.

The ardor of the competitors was so great, the exaggeration of the price became so enormous, that the celebrated sale of twin boys, formerly made by the slave dealer Thoranius * to Mark Antony, was completely eclipsed. Triumvir as he was, and lover of a queen who dissolved in her drink pearls valued at several millions of sestertii (doubtless with the intention of improving its flavor), never would Antony have consented to pay the enormous sum Castor and Pollux cost the young fool who remained vanquisher in the adjudication.

Scarcely a week had elapsed, when one night an old man, passing along the public way in which was situated the house belonging to the opulent purchaser of these two children, stumbled over an inanimate body.

This body, bleeding and bruised, was that of Pollux, lying out in the dark upon the pavement, where they had just thrown him as dead.

* These twins cost Antony 200,000 sestercia (about 36,000 francs). Pliny, Nat. Hist. Lib. VII, cap 12.

The old man, moved with compassion, lifted up the child, either because he perceived that life was not entirely extinct, or because he wished to give the remains an honorable sepulture.

The young patrician answered those of his friends who, after a certain time, inquired what had become of Pollux,

"Pollux! but he permitted himself to have a will, and forcibly resisted me! I entrusted him to my steward who, I am told, is very severe, and he has relieved mo of him forever."

And there was no longer any talk of Pollux, not even from Castor, who appeared to have no will, and made no resistance. Never did he give the slightest token of remembering him who, if not his brother by birth, had been, at least, his brother in misery and slavery. Castor smiled at the master whose steward had been so heavy-handed, absolutely smiled, as if the master's hand had been paternal and caressing.

Nevertheless, Castor henceforth depreciated in value, just as an unmatched horse would at the present day, and lived obscurely, engaged in the most servile tasks

This continued two years.

The ruin of his master's house being completed at the end of that time, the creditors laid hands upon Castor, and prepared to sell him with the other goods.

In this first servitude Castor had nevertheless learned and remembered two things: he had seen in what manner, and in how short a time, a young patrician immensely rich could ruin himself, and he also knew what became of these opulent spoils, and who profited by them.

The day of the sale, which took place in the open Forum, an "argentarius" or banker named Archibulus, perceiving Castor amidst the crowd of other slaves, and being pleased with his sprightly countenance, bought him.

He wanted him to beat loudly upon the wooden tables* (a goodly number of which he possessed in the Forum), by the noise attracting the attention of those who were in quest of ready money and making them come to him.

* Martial, Lib. XII, epigr. 57, says that this was indeed the means employed to draw a crowd, by the argentarii, nummularii, and other bankers, whose offices of exchange were in the open air, and consisted of simple wooden tables.

If already in the time of Plautus and Cicero, the Forum dazzled one's eyes by the immense quantity of silver displayed around its porticoes, "aes circumforaneum," said Cicero,* it was even far more dazzling at the period of opulent degradation we now begin to study.

Castor was not at all carried away, but he patiently initiated himself into a knowledge of the management of money, and profits resulting therefrom.

Moreover, he admirably filled his office.

Thanks to his thousand ingenuities and his repeated summonses under every form and upon every tone; thanks to his charming appearance, the apparent candor of which was attractive, dissipating all suspicion of fraud, the number of clients frequenting the banker's wooden tables multiplied infinitely.

That estimable individual was in transports.

Besides the sprightly air of Castor which had at first attracted the attention of Archibulus, the latter soon perceived, in studying his young slave more closely, eyes so vigilant and ferreting, movements so bold, gestures of the hand so exactly like the contractions of a wild beast's sharp claws, and oh! very precious quality! a soul so unrelenting, that being unacquainted with his first name, which he had never enquired, he had called him Lupus, but ordinarily used its diminutive, which suited better the tender age of this little knave.

The young wolf, indeed, bit boldly at the bleeding flesh which every day he fed upon; but he longed to attack the heart, and plunge into the entrails, choice morsels that the master reserved to himself.

With this view, he persuaded Archibulus to recompense his services by permitting him to become a "collybista."

The word "collybus," which corresponds to our term change, signified then as it does now, the profit which could be realized upon the changing of coin, precious metals, deeds of trust, merchandise, goods, or moveables of every nature.

The Romans knew nothing about bills of exchange, except one or two passages of Cicero containing the idea, and we

* Cicero, ad Att. Lib. II, epist I, ad fin.

might say germ.* On the other hand, Rome, mistress of the universe, had circulated her money everywhere, and it was not necessary (particularly at the period of this story), as in our day, to provide specie peculiar to a country, for the purpose of effecting a payment or travelling there. Properly speaking, exchange of currencies did not then exist, or rather it was practised in cases so exceptional that it is useless to mention them.

But the trade in precious metals was considerable at Rome; the "nomina" or debts represented by the "syngraphae," the "chirographa," ancient forms of deeds to which certain antiquated ones still had the weakness to cling,† and the "cautiones," actual modes of acknowledgement or bills endorsed by a third party, abounded, as in our day, upon the Exchange and offered to the industry of the "argentarii" an inexhaustible nourishment.

Indeed, a note expressed upon papyrus, or those leaves of stamped paper invented by modern financiers, would not have been considered money.

But there are so many desires, so many passions, so many pressing necessities which money alone is calculated to satisfy, that the clear-sighted genius of gain has at all times perceived the interval to be filled between the note which, at a given moment, could do nothing towards appeasing a want, or satisfying a pleasure—and the shining piece of gold which, on the contrary, could do everything.

The "argentarii" and "nummularii," who were the highest order of bankers, monopolised all these fruitful operations.

Much below them and among a lower class of people, was exercised the activity of the "collybistae" or last rank of money changers.

We recognize them by a curious passage of St. Jerome, in a commentary upon a verse of the Evangelist, St. Matthew.‡

These "collybistae" occupied themselves with the poorer class, who not being able to pay the exchange in gold or

* Cicero ad Att. Lib. XII epist. 24; XI epist. 24, XVI epist. 1. Pothier Contr. praise No. 6.

† Seneca de Benef. Lib. VIII, cap. 10.

‡ Collybistae recibunt non quidem pecunias, sed alterius generis, munuscula, usura loco, ut frictum cicer, uvas passas, poma et hujus modi species, quae bellaria et ab ipsis collyba appellantur. (St. Jerome, comment upon St. Matthew, cap. 21.)

silver, acquitted themselves of it by means of inconsiderable merchandise, grey peas, pulse, dried figs, cooked grapes, pomegranates, and other fruits that the "collybistae" afterwards sold.

It was wonderful to see the young Lupus, now become a "collybistae," work with that almost innate knowledge, that guided him upon this the first theatre of his obscure exploits. He very quickly understood that the poor man's tunic too often covers the same vices as the rich man's purple robe; and if poverty and tears sometimes timidly come, begging credit for household wants, yet more frequently do vice and passion run boldly into talons ready to devour the last remnants of misery.

And then what happiness to work with such active little hands, to be able to bury their sharp pointed nails wherever there was a cry of anguish to be drawn forth, a wound to enlarge, or one already bloody to make bleed afresh.

We wish our readers had been present at the Forum the day our young Lupus began his operations as "collybista." He had in his possession a sufficient quantity of pulse and vetch, raw onions and sun-baked figs, which, endeavoring to sell advantageously, he had carefully arranged in divers piles upon the little white wooden table placed very near the heavy oak counter of the "argentarius." Oh! how handsome he was with his long, flaxen hair, his large and flashing eyes, his slight and graceful figure, and the beautiful, white linen tunic, striped with red, thrown over his shoulders! With what animation he struck upon his master's table and his own to attract the attention of those who passed, and with what enticing words he persuaded the little slave to buy that beautiful cluster of grapes, the young girl this orange, the old beggar a small measure of barley which would make him such good bread, that middle aged woman a bunch of raw onions needing only the fire to make them so sweet! At the end of the day the prettily arranged piles had disappeared from the white wooden tables, and the young Lupus profited by the moment when his master's back was turned, to assure himself that he still safely possessed, in the left pocket of his tunic, the forty sestertii he had stealthily slipped there according to the proceeds of the sale.

Happily or unhappily for Lupus, we cannot yet decide which, he could not long continue this profitable little trade.

The jealous Fates, at a moment least expected (for the "argentarius" was still young and lived soberly) cut with their implacable scissors the thread of his days, and Lupus, whilst awaiting the decision of his own fate from the heir, sadly resigned himself to those tiresome, profitless employments he had formerly submitted to during his first servitude.

Only he saw himself in possession of almost three hundred sestertii (about sixty francs) amassed as we have just said; and as the heir or creditors of the estate might think of searching the pockets of Lupus and relieving him of this little sum, one dark night he buried it in a hole under a big stone which he carefully marked.

That done, he waited more tranquilly the issue of affairs. The succession being good, the heir decided to accept it; but not intending to continue the business of a banker, Lupus was useless. Consequently he, with a certain number of other hereditary slaves no longer necessary to the new heir, formed a lot who were sold "sub hasta," that is, at auction.

This sale placed our "collybista" in the hands of a citizen who, as usual, had come to Rome to remain a certain time, and who would, at the end of a few days, return to his possessions in Bythinia.

Fulgentius was the name of this citizen.

CHAPTER III.

WHERE THE CUB BECOMES A WOLF.

IT had been seven or eight years, perhaps more, since the white wooden table of little Lupus, and Lupus himself, had disappeared from the Forum, where no one had ever seen him return, when very early one cool morning in spring, a "mensarius,"* named Ctesiphon, who had just disposed his pile of specie upon the planks of his counter, felt himself lightly touched upon the right shoulder.

* A variety of argentarius and of nummularius. Ctesiphon's proper title was that of trapezite, a Greek banker, owner of a table, trapeza. But we have preferred the term "mensarius," used by the Romans, and having the same signification.

Ctesiphon, turning round as quickly as his corpulence would permit, did not at first recognize the individual which this movement had placed before his eyes.

But soon, with a joyful cry of surprise, he exclaimed:

"By Apollo and the Muses! I believe I am not mistaken! It is my little Lupus! Yes, yes, but I should say, my big Lupus, for, my good fellow, thou hast not lost thy time, and thou hast truly grown a cubit!"

"No, Ctesiphon, I have not lost my time, you may be sure of that. But do not call me Lupus any more, no one knows me by that name, and it irritates me! Everybody now calls me nothing but Furius."

"Ah! ah! ah! Furius!" repeated the fat Ctesiphon, bursting into a laugh, "Furius! name belonging to the nobility! Oh! the good wheel of my little Lupus! Is it in his sack—Must we put Caius or Cnæus before it? Caius Furius! Cnæus Furius! How well that would sound! It would be truly patrician! Ah! ah! ah!" And Ctesiphon continued to laugh immoderately.

"Without doubt, Ctesiphon, that would sound well, particularly, if it were terminated by an honorary title, after the ancient manner. Caius, or Cnæus Furius Nomentanus. I have an idea that this name would suit me wonderfully, indeed, were I free! Unfortunately, my business does not treat of that now. Would you, Ctesiphon, lend my master about a hundred thousand sestertii?"

The change this question immediately worked on the banker's jovial face was really amusing.

It was now the turn of the future Caius, or Cnæus Furius Nomentanus to laugh immoderately.

Ctesiphon, who joined to this name we know not how many other prenomens, surnomens, and agnomens, partly Greek, partly Latin, and which we suppress for the sake of brevity, Ctesiphon passed upon the Forum, where he had been established a certain number of years (why not admit the fact at once?), for what, at the present day, is vulgarly called a fool. We are not going to discuss this delicate question, upon which we shall probably be enlightened hereafter; but the fact is, that since his coming to the Forum, he, apparently at least, had increased nothing but his corpulency, his money chest containing no more than it did on its arrival. There

was even a period when Ctesiphon, consuming nearly all day in frivolous occupations and useless amusements, but strengthened, more and more, the unfavorable opinion of those around him.

This epoch was that when Lupus, having been purchased by the "argentarius" and brought to the Forum, began to move the heart of Ctesiphon by his gracefulness and many attractive movements, which the latter daily witnessed.

Ctesiphon's enthusiasm for the little Lupus was such, that he voluntarily advanced the first sestertii, by the help of which, the "collybista," recently appointed to this office by his master, bought the white wooden table and other objects necessary to his future operations.

It was then that Ctesiphon, who occupied the neighboring counter, and whom every one saw neglect his own affairs, passing entire days in the ridiculous contemplation of young Lupus and his graceful actions, received from the other bankers the agreeable name of fool or simpleton, "nugax," a title which historical truth constrains us to record.

Nevertheless, if the associates of Ctesiphon had studied more closely his physiognomy, whilst he examined that of Lupus, they would have been convinced that enthusiasm was not the only feeling which impelled him to such loss of time, already considered money. *

An attentive observer would have indeed remarked in his features an ardent curiosity, mingled with flashes like the fires of a secret hatred, gleaming upon his usually placid, and even jovial face.

Be that as it may, Ctesiphon was not easily consoled for the sudden disappearance of the young Lupus.

After a most diligent but unsuccessful search, he resumed, doubtless for the sake of sweetening his regret, a somewhat neglected occupation, by means of which he had formerly whiled away his time at the Forum.

Ctesiphon Nugax was a decided lover of poetry, a fault much more common than one would believe among the bankers of every age—and in the midst of his piles of sesterii, there was always an unrolled volume of one of his favorite poets, Homer, Pindar, and Anacreon.

It was not the register of "accepti" and "expensi" that

* Tempus lucrum (Cicero pro Flac. 37).

occupied the first place upon the banker's bureau; it was the works of one of these sons of harmonious Greece, "my beautiful country," as Ctesiphon never failed to add. There was only one means of putting Ctesiphon in a fury; it was to speak of Latin poetry. He then swore "by Apollo and the Muses," his favorite oath, which had nothing cheering for the imprudent admirer of Virgil, Horace, and Catullus.

We can understand now what must have been his joy when he saw his little Lupus suddenly reappear.

"Acknowledge, Ctesiphon, that I have frightened you dreadfully," continued Lupus, when he had given full vent to his mocking gayety, striking with the palm of his hand the banker's big stomach, and endeavoring to dissipate the anxiety manifested upon the countenance of the latter. "Yes, I agree my demand is a little abrupt! Nevertheless, you have these sestertii good and sound. I, myself, am not like others, I know how to see and understand Ctesiphon! Old Greek!"

Ctesiphon's little eyes glanced from side to side with an expression of anxiety, and even of terror, almost pitiable. But young Lupus had chosen a favorable opportunity; he remembered the banker's old habit of always arriving at the Forum nearly an hour before his associates—another piece of cunning on Ctesiphon's part—and, consequently, there was no indiscretion in this revelation made, moreover, in a cautious tone.

"Well, Ctesiphon," said Lupus, "if some one would say, it will not be you, Ctesiphon, who will give this hundred thousand sestertii, it will be Furius who, having confidence in his good friend, Ctesiphon, gives him the money to lend it to the master, what would you think of that?"

Never did a cloud, threatening the sky with a veil of gloom, rend itself more quickly, than the sombre tints which for an instant had covered the physiognomy of Ctesiphon.

"Ah! ah! ah! he would do as he says, this little Lupus! A hundred thousand sestertii! he would bring that to his good friend Ctesiphon in the hollow of his hand! Ah! ah! ah! I knew it well, I did, that my little Lupus would be lucky!—And as to these sestertii?"—

"When we shall have prepared the deed, Ctesiphon, I shall be satisfied with your simple 'nomen,' without any

endorsement from a third party. The 'nomen' of my good friend Ctesiphon, I value more than all the securities in the world."

"But, my little Lup, thou art a slave, what would be the good of a deed and my name, if, as is said, the law refuses thee a suit—and if not myself but my heirs—we are all mortal—could laugh in thy face, when thou wouldst demand thy hundred thousand sestertii?"

It appeared that Ctesiphon made this simple observation in a very peculiar manner, for Lupus, after having considered it attentively, replied, giving to his words a particular accent.

"I pay attention, Ctesiphon, to my rights, and I see in the law that the slave, who is at least a man, enjoys some privileges called 'naturels,' among others, that of not being robbed. Hence, Ctesiphon, if my master or his creditors do not handle my means, and it is precisely to avoid this I entrust it to you *—neither Ctesiphon, who might have an avaricious thought, nor the heirs of Ctesiphon, who might be tempted to laugh in my face, would succeed! Besides, I do not intend to reclaim this sum before my emancipation.—This money you will have for ten years, at least, Ctesiphon!"

"And what profit?" inquired the "mensarius," now become attentive and circumspect.

"The profit? you know it. It will be the same as you are accustomed to make in your underhand loans to gentlemen's sons, old sulk! Only you will divide it in two parts, one for you, the other for me—that is very just—and never will you have made sestertii so easily—By means of a stipulation, the terms of which are contained in the deed, you will, after each operation, add interest to principal. † I have calculated that in ten years when we settle our account, you will owe me in this way, at least four hundred sestertii."

"And if I refuse"—

"No one ever refuses to gain silver which costs nothing, for consider well, Ctesiphon, you make no advance. Moreover, if you refuse"—

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* Properly speaking, only the master's creditors could, in case of insolvency, dispossess the slave of his means. Juvenal attests (Satyr III, vers. 189) that custom, less rigorous than law, branded as disgraceful the master's taking from a slave what had been allowed the latter as his own means.

† An agreement called anatocisme, well known among the Romans, and which at a later period they were obliged to regulate, so exorbitant were the results.

And at this instant, Furius, formerly Lupus, still more anciently Castor, showed his teeth so white and sharp, that the "mensarius" hastened to reassure this friend and himself, by making a gesture of assent, which immediately brought down the contracted and menacing lip of his young interlocutor. Ctesiphon was thinking that, if formerly he had lost time contemplating little Lupus, the latter, on the contrary, had well employed his in studying deeply his good friend Ctesiphon's most secret operations.

He replied then :

"Is the investment safe, at least? I ask that rather for thee than myself, Furius, for it would be truly sad if thou shouldst lose thy hundred thousand sestertii. Understand well, that I do not vouch for the solvency of thy debtor."

"Admirably safe! Ctesiphon—the largest fortune in Rome. If we two follow well the plan I am going to show you, to each one of my coins will be suspended so many others, that it will be like a bunch of silver, or rather golden grapes, we shall find on our vine."

"By Apollo! He knows well how to bring wine to one's mouth, this dear Furius! It is poetry, that, and the best! Ah! ah! ah! How wonderful a boy is my little Lup.—But thy master's name?"

"Aulus Plautius Lateranus."

"Bad credit, dear Furius! bad credit! Everybody knows that since the time of Nero, who confiscated all their goods, the Laterans have not a farthing. * Their house † is still in the hands of the State. ‡ The greatest fortune in Rome! Thou art deceived!"

"Dear Ctesiphon, did you know Fulgentius?"

"The opulent possessor of those immense estates in Bythinia, Thrace, Illyria, and Spain?"

"The same, Ctesiphon. He was the father of Aulus Plautius Lateranus, and has been dead some months. We

* Tacitus, Histor. Lib. XV.

† Extolled by Juvenal, who also mentions its confiscation, as one of the most beautiful in Rome.

‡ It was not long in becoming the property of Maximian Hercules, who gave it to his daughter Fausta, second wife of the Emperor Constantine. He being converted to Christianity, donated it to the Bishop of Rome as a residence. It is even upon the same ground where stood the ancient Lateran dwelling, that the actual basilica of St. John Lateran was erected, which thus became the mother of all the churches of Rome and the world, as declared by the inscription still borne on the front. "Sacro-Sancta Lateranensis Ecclesia, Omnium Urbis et Orbis Ecclesiarum Mater et Caput."

have returned to Rome since his death. I passed six years in Bythinia, Ctesiphon, and it was there I amassed my first hundred thousand sestertii."

"By Apollo! I understand nothing of all this, dear Furius. How can Fulgentius be the father of Aulus Plautius Lateranus? It is not even the same name!"

"Without doubt, but it is the mother's name. Dear Ctesiphon, if, instead of amusing yourself studying the poets of Greece, 'your beautiful country,' you would cultivate a slight acquaintance (do not get angry!) with the Roman laws, one passage would explain 'all that' in a moment."

"What passage?"

"'Partus matrem sequitur,' when there is no marriage, the child's state and position are decided by that of the mother, and——"

"Ah! the mother was not married?"

"Not married, Ctesiphon! Just you go and say that to Aula Plautia Laterana, widow of Fulgentius, and you will see how she will receive you, banker and Greek as you are! Truly, Ctesiphon, you worry me. What! do you not understand?"

"By Apollo and the Muses! or rather, by the Sphynx! for it is an indecipherable enigma how wishest thou that I should understand it? She is not married, and, nevertheless, she is married! that is what, if I am not mistaken, results from thy own words!"

"Not married legally, Ctesiphon, married according to the manner of the Christians, before their priests! It is well for you to understand that, with the exception of Fulgentius, who never wished to hear of these ridiculous and dangerous practices of a worship, that doubtless our Emperors will soon put an end to, all this family, including my young master, are Christians; at least, I have been told that Aulus Plautius Lateranus had been, like his sister, educated by the mother in the principles of that sect."

At this revelation, Ctesiphon, who it appeared hated the Christians (why, we do not precisely know), threw himself into a real paroxysm of fury, the manifestations of which he evidently endeavored to exaggerate before his young friend.

"I ought to have doubted it!" cried he, "ah! the Chris-

dans! That is yet one more of their plots! It is thus they hope to recover the ancient patriciate, and crush us other plebeians, as formerly they crushed their inferiors! What is there that, once for all, will rid us of this vermin?"

"Be calm, Ctesiphon, be calm! it is not necessary to get in such a rage," replied Furius, who, probably expecting this explosion of wrath from the fat banker, allowed him to give it full vent for some moments. "'This vermin, the word is not poetical, but it is good; 'this vermin' has multiplied too much to be easily destroyed; but if you wish to do a little towards its destruction, aid me to ruin the son of Aula Plautia Laterana. In ten years, at the day of my enfranchisement, his ruin will be, I believe, an accomplished thing!"

And as the impulsive outbreak and loud tones of the "mensarius" had collected around the speakers some money changers, who now began to arrive and take their accustomed places at the Forum, Furius, darting at Ctesiphon a glance in which there was a very perceptible recommendation of prudence, added:

"We can, I think, terminate this conversation, for we agree, perfectly agree, do we not, Ctesiphon?"

"Oh! with all my heart!" quickly replied Ctesiphon, "I will joyfully aid you in this affair."

These words, for the curious listeners wishing to understand the secret of their fat associate's irritation, appeared to be sufficient explanation of the cordiality with which Furius and Ctesiphon shook hands on separating, and exchanged other pledges of affection, truly touching.

A neighboring "nummularius," nevertheless, could not refrain from saying aloud:

"Another affair in which our friend Ctesiphon will be duped by this young man! The old loiterer does not make dupes of others every morning. It is truly a great deal of trouble, his trying to injure our clientship, by coming every day before the appearance of Aurora's rosy fingers. What a funny fellow this Ctesiphon is with his poetry! I should be sorry if he were to leave the Forum!"

As to Furius, those present had not had time to recognise him as the little Lupus of a few years past.

CHAPTER IV.

TEN YEARS WELL EMPLOYED.

THERE is in the history of ancient slavery something even sadder than slavery itself; it is the history of enfranchisements.

We have never read one scene in the comedies of Plautus,* where that author, to amuse and make the public laugh, places in the mouth of a poor slave, one of his characters, a heart-breaking boast of all the punishments inflicted on these unfortunate beings by cruel masters, without feeling ourselves revolt at this excessive degradation which could go so far as to make a mock of the iron collars, the whips and chains, with no other end in view than that of excusing or flattering the most merciless instincts, and most frightful caprices of a barbarity without control as without limits.†

But we find, in this same Plautus and even in the sweet Terence, situations still sadder, considering the honor of humanity, and the descriptions with which these poets pleased, exhausting in many places upon these shameful pictures all the colors of their style, all the resources of their powerful genius. We wish to speak of those scenes, abounding in their comedies, where the slave is, in a manner, made the equal of his master, not by the spirit of beneficence and virtue, but by that of evil and low intrigue, resulting from and encouraging all the vices, all the crimes of a degraded old age or infamous youth.

It must be said that at Rome, Liberty, that goddess so enticing to slavery, and towards whom rose daily the aspirations and prayers of two millions of slaves, had not placed her statues at the end of luminous paths, which the unhappy one could follow with a firm and dignified step, but on the edge of those marshy banks where the foot slips every instant.

Permit us to translate here a short passage from Denis‡ of Halicarnassus, thus proving, even by the mouth of a contemporary, what we have just said:

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*See this scene in Plautus, Asnarius, act III, sc. 2.

†Seneca the Tragic could indeed say in his piece, the Trojans: Lex nulla servo parcit aut paenam imped.t.

‡Roman Antiquities, Lib. IV, cap. 24.

"Such is, at our epoch," says this author, "the decadence of morals, such the dishonor into which Roman probity has fallen, that a great number of slaves buy their liberty, and become citizens, only by means of silver amassed in their robberies, burglaries, crimes of all sorts; others are accomplices of their masters in empoisonings, homicides, offences against the gods and republic, and receive in recompense the favor of emancipation."

So great was the extent of these evils, that the legislator himself was obliged to oppose certain obstacles to these deeds, difficult of explanation, because of the shameful details to which we must descend, but so multiplied, that they had thrown families into confusion and disorder, menaced the honor of true citizens, even compromised the stability of Rome.

In consequence, Augustus, and after him Tiberius, promulgated three laws; that of Tusia Caninia (Year of Rome, 751), of Aelia Sentia (Year of Rome, 757), and of Junia Norbana (Year of Rome, 772), which are not to be considered restrictive of liberty, but simply restraining the license of emancipation in not permitting it, except for causes honorable alike both to master and slave.*

Among these various laws, we shall refer to but two articles in the law of Aelia Sentia, and that, because a knowledge of them will be necessary to a clear comprehension of our story.

The first enacted, that the master should have attained the age of twenty years before he was capable of granting a single emancipation. This aimed at preventing youthful masters from being circumvented by the interested dealings of their slaves.

The second forbade an emancipation before the slave was thirty years old.

By this it was designed that he should merit the favor of freedom, by a servitude sufficiently prolonged to test his industry and worth.

If these two conditions, with others also rigorously exacted by the law of Aelia Sentia, were not fulfilled, the freed

*See for these three laws other Jurisconsults such as Gaius, Comment. I, 1 and 3 Ulpianus, fragm. I, 11 Inst. Lib. 1, Tit. 5, 6, 7; historians such as Tacitus, Annal. XV, 55; Suetarius, Aug. cap. 40; Dion Cassius, Histor. Lib. LVI, cap. 33; Denis of Halicarnassus, 18 cit. loc. Justinian Inst. Lib. Tit. VIII, 4

slave acquired, under the qualification of "Latin Junien," or even of "Deditice," but a figure of liberty, vanishing at his death, for at that moment, all his goods were seized upon by the master, as absolutely as if they had been an inheritance, and the slave had never enjoyed liberty.

These laws, well known, maintained with inflexible rigor, producing, moreover, consequences from which there was no means of escape, at first filled with despair the soul of Lupus, passing from the counter of the "argentarius" to Bythinia, where Fulgentius, father of Aulus Plautius Lateranus, habitually resided.

How, indeed, even dream of liberty, for which he had begun to thirst so ardently, when separated from it by an interval of more than fifteen years? By what flatteries, or by what humiliations merit a benefit which could be granted him?

Be that as it may, Fulgentius, like everyone else, was not long in being pleased with the exterior of young Lupus, and having a son near the same age, saw no impropriety in placing them together, so that Lupus might serve the latter as a distraction, and in some measure, as a plaything.

Lupus, with his natural instincts, and premature experience acquired upon the Forum, with the love of gain awakened in him by his first profits, and which he had not had time to satisfy—Lupus soon saw all the benefits to be reaped from this new situation, whilst awaiting the arrival of liberty. He attempted nothing, indeed, except to attach himself to the person of a master, still young assuredly, but whose very youth, easy to captivate and seduce, formed precisely the fundamental base of a plan, beginning vaguely to trace itself in the mind of the audacious little slave.

The son of Fulgentius had reached, at this period, the age of fourteen, and Lupus who had been sold the first time at eight years, and had passed about five or six more with his two first masters, was exactly or nearly the same age. The powerful breath of passions, already consuming Lupus' heart, could then be communicated to that of Aulus Plautius Lateranus, and there enkindle a conflagration, which spreading afar, would devour everything. What a brilliant prospect for him who knew how to render himself the necessary accomplice of all the follies of a young patrician, bear-

ing one of the noblest names in ancient Rome, and son of one of her most opulent citizens. What an inexhaustible source of profit, and even of fortune!—And Liberty!—Alas! we have said, that Lupus could not perceive her except at such a distance as would have discouraged any other, but which, after having grieved him for some time, had only the effect of redoubling his secret ardors.

In awaiting his thirtieth year, he well knew how to carve it for himself one of those situations he had known slaves to enjoy at Rome, and which we shall soon see realized in his person.

Full of these designs, profoundly concealed, the young Lupus commenced by imagining a little history that would render him interesting to Fulgentius and his son. He was not a slave by birth, he had been the victim of a slave dealer named Chaerestrate, but could not furnish the proof, he was very young when overtaken by this great misfortune, and could not recollect either the country of his birth, or the family to which he belonged—only this he learned by a scrap of a document stolen from Chaerestrate, that his name was Furius, feeble mark which might allow him, perhaps, later to show his ingenuity.

Fulgentius would not acknowledge his belief in this account, thus depriving himself of a dearly bought slave; but still the recital had its effect upon father and son, and Furius henceforth called by that name—name pertaining to the nobility, as Ctesiphon has revealed to us—obtained a separate rank in the family* and almost an honorable place in the house.

It was then, that changing the habits of the wolf for those wily and surer ones of the serpent, we see Furius rise from the ground where he had humbly crept, elevating himself silently and gradually, intent upon crushing in his caressing rings the person of his young master.

We know what the flower or the fruit becomes, when an untoward blast has replaced the penetrating ardor of the sun and sweet freshness of the breeze. In a very short time,

*Family, collection of things which are useful: res quae famulantur. Such was, indeed, at Rome, the true sense of this word, the signification of which has become so great among us. It was applied particularly to slaves dependent on the same master.

Aulus Plautius Lateranus, chilled by contact with this corrupt creature, felt all the vigorous flowers of his infancy wither away, giving place to that harsh vegetation of an accursed earth. And yet in his tenderest years, an admirable mother, whom our readers will know hereafter, had prepared his heart for the durable influence of the most noble virtues; but this mother was no longer there to hinder these sinister efforts, and the father saw in these first passions only the impulses of a generous, youthful nature.

And the hideous serpent continued stealthily to accomplish his work, drawing tighter and tighter the folds with which he had enveloped his victim.

Bythinia was not then what it became at a later period, and Nicomedia, its capital, was not yet the city that Diocletian attempted to make the rival of Rome. The emperors, his predecessors, truly, had had other things to do, more important than choosing a residence and peacefully living there. In truth, all of them, feeling like himself, repulsed from Rome, had thought of transferring afar the seat of government; but amidst the decay and slow decomposition of Roman affairs, they had been occupied in trying to keep together the various parties which composed the Empire, but were crumbling away on all sides. Barbarous hordes, appearing, nearly at the same time, from all quarters, it was necessary to run from the depths of Gaul and Germany into Armenia and Persia, afterwards repass from the East into the West, endeavoring to restrain their efforts and prevent their invasions.

A theatre, like that of Bythinia, was not adapted for exploits of the kind contemplated by Furius; consequently he longed for a return to that Rome whose splendors he continually extolled, and whose profound depths he had already measured. But how get there? Fulgentius, for reasons we are to explain, showed himself in Rome but rarely, and when Aula Plautia Laterana, his noble spouse, had retired to the estate in Spain.

A mysterious event with which we would not wish to charge the wickedness of Furius Lupus, in spite of strong presumptions, unraveled, at a propitious moment, this state of affairs. Carried off by a short malady, due to poison, the presence of which in his veins he discovered but too late,

and which he had imbibed he knew not in what cup or from what hand, Fulgentius died suddenly, and at the very time his son was twenty years old.

He left another child, a daughter, who had always lived with the mother either at Rome or in Spain, and whom he scarcely knew.

This young girl, of rare beauty, was but sixteen.

It was but fifteen days after the death of Fulgentius, when Aulus Plautius Lateranus, having collected the ashes of his father, set out for Rome, accompanied by Furius, the indispensable confidant of all his projects. Immediately on arriving, the latter confided to Ctesiphon the first hundred thousand sestertii, result of the six years' dissipation into which he had drawn his young master.

These hundred thousand sestertii were but the commencement of that regal opulence Furius had promised himself at the still far distant day of his emancipation.

In fine, to abridge, we shall simply say, that at twenty-five, the age when one legally attained his majority at Rome, Furius now become his master's "procurator" or steward, was sufficiently rich to construct the opulent dwelling we have endeavored to describe in our first chapter, and dwelt there with a certain number of slaves belonging to him as "vicarii."

At thirty, Furius would have been able to have bought the Empire, just as Didius Julianus had done sixty years before, if, by chance, the Empire had been for sale.

Who knows? perhaps he thought of it.

At thirty also, he had realized the hope formerly cherished, when in asking Ctesiphon's help to ruin the son of Aula Plautia Laterana, he had added:

"In ten years, at the day of my emancipation, this will be, I believe, an accomplished thing."

It was, indeed, accomplished, and Furius reaped the benefits.

Ctesiphon, his associate, as only creditor of Aulus Plautius Lateranus, now solicited of the lender the right of seizing upon the debtor's goods in that very curious form preserved by Cicero, Gaius, and Theophilus.*

* Cicero, pro Quintio, cap. 19; Gaius III, nos. 77 and 78; Theophilus, Lib. III, Tit. 12.

This taking possession (" missio in poss ionem ") should be followed by a publication, " proscriptio," of the Illyrian, Bythinian, Thracian, and Spanish estates, made by placards in the Forum and most frequented places of the city; afterwards of their sale to the highest bidder, when all the legal forms had been complied with.

Moreover, Furius was free, but as we have already said, he had been free only since yesterday.

He had put a few thousand sestertii into the dishonored hand of his master, and at this price, the master passing his hand over the slave's head, had pronounced, before a magistrate, the solemn formula of emancipation.

Then Aulus Plautius Lateranus fled from Rome.

Do we know now what, perhaps, caused Furius the most vivid satisfaction amidst all these joys indulating his heart?

It was the newly acquired power of ordering by himself and for himself, the chastisement inflicted upon the poor child we saw extended on the ground, as Furius drew aside the curtain of his " dormitorium."

It was the also newly acquired power of filling with consternation the affrighted crowd of slaves, hitherto rebellious to a master who did not belong to himself.

But the hour of awaking had sounded for Furius, already attired in his festal robe, and an attentive slave informs him that Carpinatius and Ctesiphon, his two guests, are just entering the dwelling.

CHAPTER V.

THE SUPPER OF THE THREE GRACES.

FURIUS LUPUS had acquired not only that immense opulence resulting from the ruin of Aulus Plautius Lateranus; his contact with the young patricians, accomplices and companions of his master's disorders, afforded him the opportunity of swallowing up other fortunes which dropped into his hands, always ready to receive fragments of such wrecks accumulated around him by the fervid heat of ardent passions.

Moreover, he joined to this, his principal occupation, other industrial habits which were inexhaustible sources of abundant profit.

Thus he practiced pawnbroking on a grand scale; and this accounts for his dwelling being encumbered with so many rare and precious objects, which he well knew how to sell at a most exorbitant price, if, when the term, rigorously prescribed by custom had expired, his debtors did not reimburse the sums advanced upon these rich spoils.

Again, he was an impudent usurer, increasing, by the highest rates of interest, his silver amassed in all these sordid ways.

Furius had secured his rights; he had told Ctesiphon so whilst scolding him for not being better acquainted with the Roman laws. But in these affairs, being a man eminently practical, he was very cautious of taking part in any of those speculative questions, dividing the prudent, among others, that of usury, one species of which, styled "onciarium"* was introduced at Rome by the ancient law of the Twelve Tables, and the other, "centesimum," imported at a later period by the Greek bankers. Furius, honoring the example of old Cato (who, by the way, was a first-rate usurer), and knowing the utility of both sorts, turned his attention to each in turn, being guided by circumstances, that is, the persons with whom he was dealing, and especially his own opportunities. It sufficed him that the profit could be gigantic, and thanks to his manner of understanding and practicing either "onciarium" or "centesimum," we can rest assured that it seldom failed of being so.

Furius, with so many resources ostensible or concealed, with so many open coffers swallowing up the "aurei" or gold coin of the rich, and the last sestertii of the poor, resembled the god Plutus, who, under various names, personifying the caprices of fortune, counted at Rome sixteen temples whose altars were watered by the bitter tears of despairing humanity. But Furius was not this god Plutus, immovable upon his brazen pedestal, abasing or lifting up at will the proudest, and calmly smiling at the noise of all the other gods falling around him in the capital of the world,

*The "onciarium faenus," was so called, because the debtor gave his creditor the twelfth of an as, that is, an ounce which represents an interest of eight and a half per cent. a year. In the "centesimus," on the contrary, the creditor was given a hundredth part of the capital, but as he received it every month, it was an annual interest of twelve per cent.

under Christianity's vigorous blows, and saying that he alone would reign, and forever over Rome and the universe. Furius was a slave, and as a slave he must incessantly have his eyes fixed upon that hand which, with one stroke, could lay him low and seize upon all his riches, making of him forever the most miserable of wretches.

Consequently, Furius had taken all necessary precautions.

In the first place, except the house which was indispensable for his underhand operations, and as a depository for all the pledges, "pignora," remitted to him, he possessed no real estate, because in certain ambiguous situations it is rather an embarrassing possession, as the origin can be undeniably proved, and its succession through various hands be followed with facility. Again, to conceal even the existence of those enormous sums, which for the purpose of increasing their amount, were disseminated throughout Rome and the provinces, and to prevent all possibility of their being snatched from him unawares, he made use of "pararii," sponsors or lenders of names, men who, placing themselves, as we would say, at the head of affairs, managed everything in their own names, and in such a manner as to render a discovery of the results and profits impossible.

Ctesiphon had been, for a long time, the "pararius" of Furius at Rome.

Carpinatius was "pararius" of the exterior, that is, he was specially charged with the provinces. Furius had, indeed, extended his usurious operations everywhere.

We already know Ctesiphon, or, at least, think we do. We know, for example, that he is remarkably fat, his physical condition corresponding to the stability of his employment, and, besides, what is still more indispenable for all who, like Ctesiphon, are obliged to appear under false colors, that he possesses a certain number of prenomens, nomens, and surnomens.

Nevertheless, Carpinatius had only one appellation. But the members of the "class Carpinatia" were proud of their name, well known, thanks to Cicero and afterwards Verres.*

* A Carpinatius was one of those favorites of Verres, under the cover of whose names, he disguised his usurious operation made to his administrators, often by means of the public money. (Cicero, Verr., Act. 2., nos. 70 and 76.)

This Carpinatius, a native of Syracuse, to which place he frequently returned when not employed by Furius, in traversing those magnificent Roman ways radiating from the city, even to the extremities of the then known world, this Carpinatius, we say, aged about forty, presented a type entirely opposed to that of Ctesiphon. Of a medium height and well-made form, his sinewy limbs, attached to a robust, agile body, denoted a man for whom the great fatigues of painful journeys were but the means of preserving and fortifying his vigorous health.

As to the moral qualities, there would have been no difficulty in forming an opinion of this personage, whose appearance, moreover, was far from prepossessing. His eyes fixed and penetrating, his look firm, harsh, and scrutinizing, his lips thin and almost sunk back into his mouth, whence there never issued the slightest smile, his forehead with numberless deep wrinkles, his skin without color and yet without pallor, his countenance of an austere cut—all denoted concentrated cupidity, anxiety, and jealousy, which formed, indeed, the basis of his character.

However, these two men, instruments for a number of years of the intrigues of Furius Lupus, had been invited by him to a supper in honor of his recent emancipation, and also that he might confer with them, concerning past and future affairs, of a very delicate nature.

At Rome, where a great number of guests were never invited to a feast, one composed of but three persons was called the "Repast of the Three Graces." When—rare occurrence—those invited numbered nine, it was then styled the "Supper of the Muses."*

Furius Lupus, Carpinatius, and Ctesiphon, consequently, represented the Three Graces

It is very evident that there could not have been, as formerly in mythological times, any question of deciding among them the prize of beauty; the only question would have been as to which one excelled in moral deformity, and then not the shepherd Paris would have pronounced the decision, but one of the three judges, Minos, Eacus, and Rhadamanthus, invoked from the depths of the infernal regions.

* Aulus Gellius, Noctes Atticae, Lib. XIII, cap. 11.

The reader will, perhaps, be disappointed and displeased at not being entertained with a detailed account of the supper offered by Furius to his two friends and associates, with the "menu" of meats which composed it, thus giving them a sample of that Roman gastronomy, the intemperance of which, above all, has been so celebrated. But we answer with Horace, "non est hic locus," this is not the place, for they supped badly with Furius, whose habits and instincts all tendered to economy. No one would have met in his "triclinium"* those numberless slaves who, in other houses, waited, attentive to the least desires of flower-crowned guests, and renewed incessantly, in the midst of an atmosphere saturated with most intoxicating perfumes, and to the sound of musical instruments and voluptuous dances, the exquisite wines, frozen in snow, the light meats prepared to give one an appetite, and those more substantial that succeeded, pastry kneaded with honey, sweetmeats, and other dainties which, under the name of "bellaria," completed the enjoyments of a suitably prepared repast.

Furius, himself a slave, finding it difficult, in consequence, to exact obedience, mistrusting, moreover, the jealous investigations and interested attachment of others, had reduced, as much as possible, the number of his "vicarii," retaining only those who were absolutely necessary to superintend the various branches of his commerce and its operations.

Nevertheless, as it would be impossible in a dwelling so well provided with everything as that of Furius not to find, for festive occasions, some dainty provisions and good wine such as that of Falernum Massicum, Cecuba, Alba, and Surrentum, it appears that Carpinatius and Ctesiphon had no cause of regret at having supped with him. The illumined face of the jovial Ctesiphon, who was languidly extended upon a couch of rich, purple cushions, would, doubtless, have expressed a little more than he desired, had a slave presented him one of those small, polished steel mirrors, that guests were accustomed to ask for, from time to time, for the purpose of studying the various shades of their heightening color, and regulating, with a perfect knowledge of its course, the degrees of their intemperance.

*Triclinium, dining room with three couches.

But in Carpinatius, there was no trace of that "ebria jucunditas," extolled by Horace, as the happy limit at which their conviviality should cease, except a slightly deeper shade of rose added to the uncertain ground of his ordinary color. Furius was fully himself, and did not forget to prove it by several shafts of ridicule discharged, from time to time, at his good friend Ctesiphon.

At length, upon a signal from their master, all the slaves having disappeared, and the "triclinium" filled with that silence which opens the heart and invites confidence, Furius Lupus, raising himself up from the festal couch, and leaning his left elbow upon the edge of the table, holding in the right hand a cup full of wine.

"Friends," said he, in a solemn voice "I make this libation to Jupiter Liberator!

"To the rich Furius! To the god Plutus!" hastily exclaimed Ctesiphon, forgetting, for the first time in his life, Apollo and the Muses, and saturating the costly carpet, which served as a tablecloth, with all the contents of a large amphora of wine he had seized.

It was now the turn of Carpinatius, but greatly to the astonishment of the other two, his hand remained fixed, his body immovable.

"Well, Carpinatius?" said Ctesiphon, regarding him with surprise.

"And whom shall I invoke?" demanded Carpinatius, answering this look. "You have named the only two divinities I know, Liberty and Fortune. I would not waste a cup of the commonest wine for any other invocation."

But, as if suddenly changing his mind and recollecting himself, he raised above his head a large vessel filled with the intoxicating, highly colored liquor of Cecuba, and pouring it upon the table, said, in a shrill voice:

"I make this libation to durable Liberty and increasing Fortune!"

Furius started, and there was a vague smile upon the compressed lips of Carpinatius, as he saw Ctesiphon hastily bury his empurpled face in the cushions, doubtless, to conceal the sudden pallor which had enveloped it.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PATRICIAN SLAVE.

THESE libations, which terminated the repast, were followed by a deep silence, during which Furius examined, with the most anxious attention, the countenances of his two guests.

At the end of a few minutes, still keeping his looks fixed upon Ctesiphon, he replied in a calm, firm tone:

"Thank you, Carpinatius, for your libation. Yes, I wish lasting liberty and increasing fortune, and by my familiar genius! I believe I possess them, and that no one shall take them from me! Dear Ctesiphon, recover thyself, truly thou excitest my pity. I would not have believed that my Falernum could so easily have unsettled an admirer of Anacreon, the bard of beauty and good wine!"

"This, dear Furius! always amiable and pleasant! But you can speak, I listen!"

"I did not say that I would speak, whatever may have been my intention. Evidently thou art not thyself, dear Ctesiphon—thy head is turned!"

"That's it! That's it! Yes! indeed, my head is turned! I ought to have mistrusted that Falernum a little more! At last, dear Furius, I am now yours; this passing intoxication is already dissipated."

Ctesiphon made the greatest efforts to recover himself, and, at length, partially succeeded.

We must here remark, that whilst Furius observed, in speaking to Carpinatius, the most becoming mode of speech, his manner of addressing Ctesiphon was different, being condescending and patronizing. Ctesiphon, on the contrary, spoke not a word to his former little Lupus except most reverently. Formerly, upon the Forum, and before the little white wooden table, it was the reverse. Ctesiphon said "thee and thou" to Lupus, and Lupus showed a great respect for his good friend Ctesiphon.*

*The difference we (French) make between thou and you did not really exist at Rome; and yet there was something in their mode of speech which established this difference they wished to make between persons. (See, on this point, a note in our previous work Aurelia, explaining how, for facility of expression, we formerly employed the same method used now, and which consists simply in the forms of our actual conversation.)

What a thing is Fortune, and how she changes men and their customs!

"Well, Ctesiphon," said Furius, "if thou art now 'tui compos,' thyself again, pay attention! And you, Carpinatius, lend me a favorable ear."

"And first," continued he, after another pause employed in examining anew the countenances of natures so diverse as those of his two listeners, "you both know that an invariable custom imposes upon the freedman, at the day of his manumission, the choosing of a name. Hence, I name myself to-day, and no one ought ever to call me otherwise, I name myself Cnæus Furius Nomentanus!"

"Ah! ah! ah!" cried Ctesiphon, suddenly recovering the joyous expression of his habitual language, "our dear Furius forgets nothing!—Nor I either!" added he, in a whisper, and with that accent of hatred we have already noticed. "Imagine, dear Carpinatius, it was just ten years ago, at the Forum, that Furius said to me he would one day be called thus! and, by Appollo! he keeps his promise! But, at that time, you hesitated between Caius and Cnæus. Would you let us know," asked the banker, turning to Furius, "why you have decided for Cnæus!"

"Caius, which was the prenomen of the Greeks, has a plebeian scent not much liked at the present day, at least, in certain circles I wish to approach. Cnæus has a perfume of Pompeian aristocracy, quite the fashion."

"I understand," said Carpinatius, "the old families! They are indefatigable in their efforts to repulse the Emperors from Rome, and there install whom?"

At this moment, the countenance of the new Cnæus Furius Nomentanus wore an unaccountable smile.

"Carpinatius, dear friend," murmured he, "there are many things which can be divined and not said! But remember well these two remarks of mine! The future master of Rome will be he whose immense riches will heighten his great name and position!—Before a year I hope to be, and will be, the happy and stately spouse of Aula!"

"You!" cried Ctesiphon.

This simple exclamation contained a meaning which did not escape Furius. If Ctesiphon had said: "You, Furius! her brother's slave—you think of marrying Aula! Aula, the

daughter of that proud matron called Aula Plautia Laterana! Aula! the sister of him whose ruin you have achieved! Aula! the daughter of Fulgentius whose death was your work!"—it would have added nothing to the signification of the only word he had uttered.

Furius cast upon him a look, that stopped short in his throat any other expression that might perhaps have issued from it, and affecting composure, mingled with a certain amount of bitter irony, hastened to reply:

"Yes, I! The astonishment and simplicity of this dear Ctesiphon are truly surprising! He must always begin by some nonsense that is in his brain, and to which he would give vent if not restrained. And why should I not espouse Aula? Because of the suspicions cast upon me at the death of Fulgentius, and which I immediately dissipated, as the wind blows away a light straw? How silly all that! Silly also that imputation of having ruined a young patrician who had no other creditor but my good friend, Ctesiphon, as can be proved by all the "nomina" signed with his name! As to the proud Aula Plautia Laterana and Aula herself not accepting the former slave of their son and brother, would it be because Fulgentius, an enriched usurer, who acquired immense estates, the sale of which my good friend, Ctesiphon, now publishes in his capacity as only creditor of the son, would it be because this Fulgentius himself was not also a freedman? What do you think of it, Carpinatius?"

"I think that Diocletian, of Dalmatia, enfranchised slave of the senator Arulinus, * and now Caius Valerius Aurelianus Diocletianus, Emperor of Rome; that Maximianus called Hercules, his associate in the Empire, formerly a hireling in Pannonia, afterwards a simple soldier; that Caius Galerius, son of Romula, a woman who tended cattle in the mountains of Dacia, whose surname is going to be changed from that of Armentarius † into Maximianus, to make him a Cæsar, and give him in marriage Valeria, daughter of the Emperor;—have honored not only the rank of freedman, but even a much inferior class—and hence, I say, that Aula Plautia Laterana herself, widow of a freedman, would act unwisely and unbecomingly in disdaining for her daughter—"

* Aurelius Victor, Epitome, in Diocl.—Eutropa has said, notwithstanding, that Diocletian was the son of a recorder.
† Herdsman. Galerius was created Cæsar A. D. 292.

"Him," continued Furius, interrupting Carpinatius, "him, who with a great patrician name, would bring her two patrician fortunes, resplendent with all the brilliancy money can give."

"Oh!" said Ctesiphon, refilling a large tumbler within reach, and pouring its contents upon the table, "I am of the same opinion as our dear Carpinatius, and I make this libation to the durable liberty and increasing fortune of my ancient little—of our happy Furius! But tell us this grand patrician name, and two patrician fortunes."

"Nomentanus. After the victory of Servilius Priscus Fidenas over the Nomentanians, and the capture of their city in the year 335 of Rome, did not our fathers honor him with this glorious surname Nomentanus, if not by adding it to the names he already possessed, at least, by calling thus the way where his house was situated—But I am heir to the last Servilius, and in eight days, I shall occupy his dwelling in the Nomentanian way." *

"How is that?" asked, at the same time, Carpinatius and Ctesiphon, both now become very attentive.

"Servilius is the young fool who bought me, twenty years ago, from a slave dealer, named Chaerestrate, with—"

Furius, perhaps, was here going to pronounce the name of Pollux, his ancient brother in misery and slavery, when he stopped, utterly astonished at the expression manifested in the countenance and looks of Ctesiphon. But this expression, which was one of ardent and concentrated hatred, lasting but an instant, Furius appeared not to have noticed it, and continued:

"Servilius died insolvent some months ago. He had spent two magnificent inherited estates—our dear friend Ctesiphon knows that—and none of the heirs named in the will deriving from it, nevertheless, the possible license of substitutions, wish an inheritance which would engender grave embarrassments, and, almost inevitably, great losses. Well, I, Furius, freedman of yesterday, Roman citizen to-day, see what I have done out of respect for the memory of my first master. In virtue of the rescript of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius—thou seest, Ctesiphon, it is good to know

* Nomentum, now Lamentana, city of the Sabines on the Allia. The Nomentanian way touched upon the Salarian.

the law—the first act of my new life, as a citizen, has been to deposit in the magistrate's hands the act by which I make myself the heir of Servilius, promising to respect the emancipations contained in the will, and fully satisfy the creditor. This will cost me about five hundred thousand pieces of gold, * which must be paid to my good friend, Ctesiphon, but—"†

"But that the good friend, Ctesiphon, who does not figure in all this for nothing, will remember his dear Furius! Ah! ah! ah! the plan is perfect! What boy so amiable and adroit as my—"

It is evident that Ctesiphon believed himself twenty years younger, and admiring his accomplished little Lupus at the white wooden table on the Forum. Furius seemed not displeased at this hilarity of his associate; at most, it was a homage to his skill, and Ctesiphon appeared to have become again the peculiar person formerly known to every one as Ctesiphon Nugax. He replied, then, in a tone somewhat less solemn than that he had hitherto used:

"Well, dear Ctesiphon, behold the grand patrician name (for I am truly Nomentanus, by the reserip of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius), and the first patrician fortune I can offer the proud Aula—the second—"

"Let us see the second; here I am ahead of thee!" murmured Ctesiphon, in so low a voice that Furius heard nothing.

"The second is her own brother's fortune that I shall restore to her, redeeming it upon the publication lately made by our dear Ctesiphon. I accept the copy of expenses drawn up by the magistrate, and no one will go beyond the sixty per cent. I intend offering, to insure myself the adjudication."

"But I believe," observed Carpinatius, "that our good friend, Ctesiphon, has, since yesterday, demanded that the

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* The piece of gold was about 25 fr. 500,000 pieces, then, would be 12,500,000 fr. At this period, the enumeration by sesterth was not abandoned, but was employed in counting only unimportant sums. When great amounts were to be expressed, it was done in gold pieces.

† When a will was abandoned by the heir on account of the testator's insolvency, and the succession likewise abandoned, any citizen, in virtue of a reserip of Marcus Aurelius, could assume the heirship, and henceforth be considered the representative of the deceased individual's name and person. But he who thus presented himself as heir must 1st, respect all emancipations conferred by testator; 2nd, settle all debts of the estate. (See Inst. of Justinian, Book III. titre XI.)

"distractio bonorum" (detailed sale of goods) should replace the "emptio" (sale in a mass).

"Hast thou done that?" quickly asked Furius, in a voice full of anger.

"Yes," responded Ctesiphon, in the calmest tone, and suddenly displaying great firmness. "Yes, I have done it out of regard for our illustrious debtor, whom I wish to spare the mark of infamy which follows the proscription of one's goods.—And—"

But Furius, interrupting him, cried out in a passion:

"Wretch! didst thou not know that this infamy would fall upon the mother and sister, and, consequently, place them more easily at my mercy? Truly, it would have humbled these haughty patricians, so proud of their name, to have seen it placarded in large characters upon the list of 'auctio' (forced sales)."*

"What do you wish, Furius? I do not know the law, you have often told me so. I did not calculate all its consequences—and besides it was to my own interest to act thus."

"What interest?"

"I quit these affairs, Furius, so do you. We settle.—I wished then to assure myself of certain domains in Thrace, where I intend to retire. It is much nearer than Rome is, to Greece, my beautiful country. I desire to tranquilly end my days there. I have upon this property a special and personal mortgage, which permits me to distrain upon the rest of his goods. Buy the others, dear Furius, buy them! You can yet gain the gratitude of Aula and her mother, by the gift of that beautiful estate in Spain they love so much, and where Aula's infancy was passed. But," added he, with more irony than all he had hitherto allowed to escape in his response, "take care of being anticipated! By your familiar demon! do not leave to some other suitor this propitious occasion of being agreeable to these two 'proud patricians,' as you just called them!"

Ctesiphon stopped; nevertheless, he could have spoken as long as he wished, and Furius would not have dreamed of interrupting him.

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*Auctio, generic term, applied to a forced sale. There were three sorts: 1st, emptio bonorum, also called, proscriptio bonorum; 2nd, distractio bonorum, and 3rd, sectio bonorum.

Carpinatius, apparently indifferent, sole witness of the new spectacle presented, at this moment, in the "triclinium," studied, with well disguised interest, the crest-fallen physiognomy of his companion.

Furius was, indeed, of a fearfully livid and mortal pallor. His look, heightened by a secret terror, was fixed upon the face of Ctesiphon, as if seeking to discover the true and concealed meaning of the words just uttered.

But Ctesiphon had said them in a tone, and with an air so full of good humor and simplicity, his attitude was so expressive of candor, these words, moreover, offered such a complete and natural explanation of affairs, that Furius stopped, no doubt, by a sudden reflection, made a violent effort to recover his self-possession, and contented himself with saying:

"Be it so, thou hast availed thyself of thy right. Now I must do the same, according to the new circumstances, created by thy determination, of which thou shouldst have apprised me. Amidst all this thou hast said one true thing. We three sever our connection, which my emancipation renders useless, and we settle. Now from my reckoning, the duplicate of which I was careful to remit to thee, thou owest me a million of gold pieces, deduction having been made for thy share. * Couldst thou, dear Ctesiphon, name the day when thou wilt re-imburse this sum?"

"Does your act of emancipation abandon to you your private property?"

"Thou canst believe, dear Ctesiphon, that this important declaration has not been neglected. Desirest thou to see the deed? Thou wilt there find everything perfectly regulated." †

"It is useless, dear Furius; I know you are not the man to leave in the hands of Aulus Plautius Lateranus what you have been ten years taking out of them. To-morrow, I will return you the million of gold pieces. We agree perfectly."

"And you, Carpinatius, have you made a computation of what profits are due me, from your operations in Syracuse,

* A million of gold pieces, 25,000,000 francs.

† In giving a slave his liberty, the master could, indeed, withhold the gift of his slave's gains. If the deed of manumission was silent on this point, he was supposed to have done so.

Asia and Egypt, by means of large funds which I furnished you? In my opinion, the amount cannot be far from—"

"Three millions five hundred thousand gold pieces,"* interrupted Carpinatius. "But these funds cannot be returned to you, except gradually, for they are all engaged at this moment, with the exception of two hundred thousand pieces that I hold at your disposal."

"By Plutus!" exclaimed Furius, endeavoring to give his voice the easy tone of joyful pleasantry, "I believe that will suffice for the insignificant acquisitions of effects to be sold at the Forum to-morrow. Dear Ctesiphon, thy especial mortgage upon the Thracian domain particularly thwarts me! What a queer idea that of ending your days in Thrace! It is said to be a frightful country! I shall not be able to restore Aula her brother's entire fortune!"

"It will remind me of Greece, my beautiful country! I am a Beotian, dear Furius, and Beotia is not near Thebes where flourished the laurels with which poets were crowned."

Carpinatius had quitted the festal hall, and at that moment walked towards the door opening upon the "atrium;" Ctesiphon did the same, and Furius, gloomy and thoughtful, remained alone in his "triclinium."

"These two men betray me," murmured he, after some instants of bitter reflection. "Carpinatius is the one causing me most anxiety, for now that I think about it, Ctesiphon knows nothing, he cannot know! How could he have known Chaerestrate, when this slave dealer had left Rome two years before the 'argentarius' bought me?—I will confess, however, this reserving of the Thracian estates is done to vex me. I have never seen clearly into the depths of this old sulk's soul!"

And in reasoning thus on the causes of his anxiety and their slight foundation, Cnæus Furius Nomentanus, the patrician slave, who in turn had quitted the festal hall, arrived at the secret place where were deposited his most precious treasures.

He came there to replace under the bolts of his strong coffers the "Codex accepti et expensi," or register of his usurious operations, which he had drawn forth to establish, if necessary, his accounts with his two honorable colleagues.

* 87,500,000 francs.

In striking the heavy cover of one of these massive pieces of furniture, the sound of gold rang heavily from its bronze lined depths.

The whole countenance of Furius lit up with a ray of joy, whilst his eyes gleamed with the haughty expression of disdain and even of defiance.

"What a magnificent pedestal!" he murmured, measuring with his eyes the height of the enormous chest. "They do not know that this contains more than double what they owe me! Fools! that old dunce, Ctesiphon, who makes a libation to the god Plutus! I will show him that the Money God stands forever, and no one can overthrow him!"

We see, notwithstanding, the day did not end as it had begun for Cnæus Furius Nomentanus.

We can say he was not quite so happy as in the morning.

CHAPTER VII.

FAMILY TROUBLES.

IN the Salarian way was an antique mansion of modest architecture but comfortable appearance, where, by the aid of lamps lighting up one of the most retired parts of the "peristylium," * were several matrons of different ages, surrounded by their waiting women, and all occupied (according to the counsel given years later by St. Jerome to Christian widows and virgins) in spinning wool with the distaff, turning the wheel and forming with their agile fingers the long and slender thread.†

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* In Roman houses the peristylium formed the second division of the edifice. Properly speaking, it was only another atrium placed in communication with the first, by a part called tablinum between the two, and by the corridors or faceus opening on both, or, more frequently, on one side only of the tablinum. The peristylium was that part of the house mostly occupied by the family, and into which only very intimate friends were invited. The apartments reserved for the women were distributed along the sides of the peristylium, which was arranged, moreover, precisely like the atrium. (To understand this well, see the plan of a Roman house.)

† Discat et lanam facere, tenere colum, ponere in gremio calathum, rotare fusum, stamina pollicere ducere. (St. Jerome, Lib. II, epist. XV. ad Laetam.)

By a simple glance at this peaceful party, we would have perceived immediately that a feeling of deep sadness, different in motive and degree, oppressed the hearts of all.

We can easily explain this painful situation by saying, that among those present, were the mother and sister of Aulus Plautius Lateranus, whose estates, seized upon by Ctesiphon, or rather under Ctesiphon's name by the new Cnæus Furius Nomentanus, the patrician slave, were to be sold the very next day at the Forum, all the usual legal delays and formalities having been complied with some time ago.

These delays, quite long, and these formalities, offering a certain complication, had been established by a law favorable to the debtor's interest. It was hoped in retarding as much as possible the solemn moment, that during this interval they could find some way of preventing the consummation of their definite ruin—that in this supreme instant they would make the most energetic efforts to collect their last resources, or to derive assistance from the credit of their families or devotion of their friends.

But the sums due from Aulus Plautius Lateranus had run up to such a figure, that it was evident no sacrifice, from any quarter whatever, could save him.

The sale "sub hasta" was then inevitable, and, as we have said before, it was to take place early next morning.

Now, to any one acquainted with the loss of reputation, the ignominy even, attached at Rome to this public sale, the affliction we have just described as weighing so heavily upon the persons reunited on the eve of this sorrowful event will not appear exaggerated.*

It is true that Ctesiphon, by an unexpected determination which we have seen excited the anger, almost the fury of Furius, had partly softened the extreme consequences of these judicial proceedings. He had, indeed, substituted for the amassed sale of effects, which alone bore the mark of infamy, the partial sale, called "distractio bonorum," and

* It must be seen in the jurisconsults, and particularly in Cicero (pro Quintio), what this forfeiture was that fell upon a Roman citizen whose goods were thus sold. Properly speaking, his civil personality disappeared under the mark of infamy with which it was loaded, he was reduced to a condition inferior to that of our bankrupts, and his social position was considerably lowered.

had mentioned the trustee under whose name it was to take place. In acting thus, Ctesiphon, either for concealed interest in his debtor, or for some particular designs of his own, making him prefer this mode of execution, saved the honor of the name and family; for the presence of a curator, who was to figure alone in every act of this legal process, turned aside from Aulus Plautius Lateranus the ignominy which, without this measure, would have fallen heavily upon him.

But this result, due only to the employment of certain legal means, did not destroy the effects of that blow, originally struck by the first publication, at the influence and civil personality of him whose estates were thus placed in the hands of his creditors. It would always be remembered that his name had figured upon the tables of the proscription of goods, and that it still existed upon the list of insolvent debtors. And, besides, these proceedings had brought to light a fact, which until then might have appeared doubtful, or have been extenuated—the vices of a young patrician, terminating as ever in the scandal and shame of an irremediable ruin. He himself so well understood all the depths of disgrace into which he had been precipitated by his follies, that the very instant the first acts of this procedure were directed against him, he hastened to leave Rome.

Such, then, were the causes of that gloomy pre-occupation which, we have said, was plainly read upon the countenances of the matrons we have mentioned, collected together and engaged in spinning, by the help of lamps imperfectly lighting the retired apartment they had chosen.

Always at Rome when persons were suffering under the blow of a sorrowful event, they believed it a duty to prove their mourning by some manifestation, which thus became the testimony of their grief.

Frequently, they appeared in public with garments of a sombre hue, sprinkled with ashes; sometimes, with a small number of friends and servants of the house enclosed in the secrecy of their dwelling, they refused all care of the body, all food, all sleep.

Times of persecution had but strengthened these customs among Christian families. The necessity of hiding from magistrates, or the pious duty of mutually encouraging one another to struggles and trials by praying together, often

reunited them thus; and it was the same whenever the hand of God pressed heavily upon them in any other way. They passed the night previous to the impending misery in depriving themselves of all repose, in order that these long hours might be employed in prayer and work, interrupted, nevertheless, by the necessary distraction of some pious narrative.

It is at a reunion of this nature we are going to make our readers assist, first informing them what matrons compose it.

The most aged of these, and she who proudly bore the name of Plautia—hitherto spotless name of an illustrious race, appeared, far more than the rest, to be crushed beneath a cruel sorrow. We immediately divine that this woman of an imposing aspect is no other than the mother of Aulus Plautius Lateranus.

Her daughter, simply called Aula, a prey to the same distress, endeavored, nevertheless, to recover herself and comfort her mother, to whom she frequently addressed words of consolation and encouragement.

Two friends of Aula, young Christian maidens, one named Basilide and the other Lactorium,* participated in the sorrows of this afflicted family, and had come hither to condole with them. Both made many efforts to divert the mind of Aula and her mother, trying to interest them in conversation, but without success; the conversation scarcely commenced, soon ceased after a few words, and Plautia and Aula were plunged, as before, in their painful reflections.

In the centre of another group of women, at some distance from the first, and also engaged in those monotonous occupations which could be exercised only in the interior of Roman houses, an old servant, named Eva, appeared the happiest among her companions. Evidently she captivated their attention by a narration, not one detail of which did they lose, judging from their countenances, although, out of regard for their noble mistress, this recital was made in a very low, restrained voice.

"So, Aula," suddenly said Basilide, endeavoring, by a

* We shall tell hereafter what was, at this epoch, the signification of those Greek or neuter names, borne by a great number of young girls of most illustrious families, such as Eustochium, Demetriade, that we notice with astonishment, in the letters of St. Jerome for example.

new effort, to break the silence which for some time had reigned among these women entirely given up to their grief, "so, in spite of all your efforts, you have not been able to find the place of retreat chosen by your brother?"

"No, Basilide, we have vainly exhausted every means in our power; it has been absolutely impossible to discover the least traces of him."

"What! already more than three months since his disappearance from Rome, and you have never received any message?"

"None! and it is this that afflicts me most. I had thought that Aulus, in his misfortunes, would have remembered that he was still dear to us, and that his sister might, perhaps, be of some comfort to him."

"That dear child! he is very unhappy!" sighed Plautia. "Our affection for him remains, why does he not return? Can his flight prevent the disgrace attached to him and us? Aulus Plautius Lateranus! To say that that name is written in plain characters upon the list of effects, published in the Forum!"

"We are Christians, Aula; this thought of our disgrace should not be the most sorrowful one for us. Moreover, is it not deserved? I had given your brother the same faith as yourself; what has he done with it?"

"Do you understand, my mother, anything of his ruin? They say he had but one creditor, this Ctesiphon, who has published the sale of his dominions! How could this man furnish him such immense sums?"

"Indeed, it is really incredible!" exclaimed, at once, both Basilide and Lactorium.

"It must be that Aulus is the victim of some secret machination!" added Lactorium, with considerable vivacity, and interrogating, with a look, Aula and her mother.

"I know not," simply answered the latter. "Like you, I am astonished. Yet, Aula, since the death of your father, ten years ago, into what dissipation has not Aulus plunged! Ah! unhappily, it is a mystery to no one, and the times are no more when a veil can be thrown over the follies of which all Rome has been informed. Not to speak of chariot races only, you know your brother has engulfed money in sustaining his faction against the contrary one. What fortune could resist such waste!—and gaming and feasts! Dear Lactorium,

we are far from the day when our venerable Agatho thought of making you the bond of union between two families, who were transported with happiness at the idea. Alas! for a long time Aulus has been no longer worthy of you!"

At these words, revealing one more wound in the heart of this desolate mother, the young girl, to whom they were addressed, hung her head and blushed deeply, whilst two big tears, dropping from her moist eyes, trickled slowly down her charming face. Then there was another spell of profound silence among those matrons, during which nothing was heard but the confused murmurs of Eva's voice, continuing her narrative, amidst the well sustained attention of the servants surrounding her.

"Dear mother," said Aula, resuming the conversation, "you have just named our venerated Agatho. Have you written and informed him of my brother's misfortunes? Ah! it is he alone who can save Aulus,—can save us all, but he is in the depths of Spain, and is now too old to undertake a journey to Rome as he used to!—It is so far. Agatho! Spain! Oh! my mother, what recollections these names awaken in me! Agatho! the holy solitary who consoled you and instructed my infancy! Spain! the beautiful country where we passed so many sweet years together! Ah! we shall never see Spain again! My brother mortgaged his Spanish possessions as he did the others, and they are to be sold to-morrow at the Forum!"

"I repeat it, Aula, the loss of worldly goods is not for us the most trying part of this affair. Your unhappy brother! who can tell me where he is at this moment? You ask if I have written to Agatho? How could I have neglected it? Many a time in Spain have I wept in his presence, and over the letter lately written to him, I wept still more!"

"If Agatho cannot come himself, doubtless he will send Severian!—Severian! If you knew," added Aula, speaking to Basilide and Lactorium, "what a strange thing—"

"And what then, dear Aula?" said both the young girls together.

"An extraordinary resemblance! Do you know Furius, one of my brother's slaves, he who became free the day before Aulus left Rome? Well, you would say that he and Severian were but one and the same person! Is it not so, mother?"

"Indeed the first time I saw this Furius, ten years ago, with Aulus, who had returned from Bythinia after the death of your father, I was struck with the likeness to Severian. But nature often plays such pranks, and I did not occupy myself very long thinking about it. It is probable, moreover, that during the last ten years this striking resemblance, which so surprised us both, is much modified."

"Who is this Severian?"

"Have you kept an eye on this Furius?"

These two questions asked at once, and with vivacity, by Basilide and Lactorium, required at the same time, on the part of Plautia and her daughter, questions and responses which, not being connected, we shall express separately.

Said Plautia to Laetorium:

"What do you mean, dear child?"

"I say that whilst Aulus has become very poor, Furius has become very rich."

"Very rich! indeed they tell me that Furius has built an elegant dwelling in the Field of Mars, and that he had acquired an important competency. But at Rome a number of slaves are similarly situated. It depends, at first, upon the services they render their masters, afterwards, upon their intelligence. We must not envy the unhappy creatures these ameliorations of their lot. I know that Furius is well adapted for such things, and—"

"You do not know all. I hear from my uncle Albinus, the broker, that Furius has taken up the will of Servilius Priscus, one of his former masters, who died insolvent, and has become the heir. That has cost him an enormous sum, five hundred thousand gold pieces, which he must pay the creditors. Furius now has the privilege of adding to his name the glorious surname of the 'clan Servilia,' and of dwelling in their house on the Nomentanian way. This is not all. My uncle Albinus has also revealed to me, that a lawsuit of Furius with a certain Carpinatius brings to light other immense treasures of Furius—lastly, it is he who, a second time, is going to become the successor* of another

* It was also, according to the Roman law, a means of becoming the successor and representative of an insolvent debtor. All his effects were sold in a mass; the purchaser, buying them at a fixed price, attached himself in this way to the person of the debtor, in representing and continuing it. Gaius, III, 77 et seqq.—Justinian, Inst. III, code XI.

master, having exceeded all the offers of the creditors, or rather the only creditor of Aulus, by giving bail for sixty per cent. upon all the debts. To-morrow Furius, now called Cnæus Furius Nomentanus, will be sole successor of Aulus Plautius Lateranus, and, perhaps, will wish also to bear your name!"

"Oh! my God!" murmured the poor mother, crushed by these precise revelations, disclosing the secret of her son's ruin. "Oh! my God! could it indeed have been this fatal influence that has ruined Aulus!"

On her side Aula, answering Basilide's question, said:

"Severian was the companion of my childish sports. The holy solitary, Agatho, whom thou hast seen, more than once, at Rome, instructed us together in the Christian faith whilst we were in Spain, and he permitted us to amuse ourselves together, under the eye of my mother, in the diversions and enjoyments of youth. For ten years I have not seen Severian, and do not know whether or not, he has preserved his striking resemblance to this Furius. In the last letter Agatho wrote my mother, he spoke of having chosen Severian to replace him in those duties of charity, that the weight of years would no longer permit him to accomplish alone. Osius, the great bishop and holy doctor,* having confirmed Severian, and clothed him with that strength which comes from on high, commissioned him to go out among the churches and solitudes, serving as a bond of union among the faithful in re-animating the faith of the one, and confirming the zeal of the other. Severian, dear friend, is one of those men whom God Himself seems to have selected as a messenger of faith and love among our dispersed brethren. I would not be astonished if, on his return from this long mission, Severian passed through Rome to render an account to the common Father of the Christians—No doubt, we shall see him."

At this moment, the interest in Eva's narrative became so great, and it appears so pleasant, that her audience, not being able to contain themselves any longer, burst into a

* Osius, Bishop of Cordova, in Spain, confessor of the faith during the persecution which this province of the Empire, like nearly all the others, had to suffer under the reign of Diocletian. Osius afterwards had the glory of instructing Constantine.

scarcely stifled laugh, without much regard to the propriety they had hitherto observed.

"And that is how," said Eva, when, at the end of some minutes, the general hilarity was somewhat appeased, "that is how, by the great mercy of the Lord, I was delivered from the hands of the judge, Lycus."

"I was sure," said Aula, whose attention was directed towards the group of servants by the noise they made, "that Eva was recounting the history of her famous gust of wind."

"Yes, mistress, I have told the story of my gust of wind," responded Eva, with that accent of respectful freedom, authorized by the sentiment that regarded servants more as brothers and sisters,* "I have told it to prove that everything happens by the permission of God, and that He alone can help us at the very moment we believe all is lost, and often by the most insignificant means."

At these words, uttered with all the fervor of Christian faith, Aula Plautia Laterana who, after the revelations of Lactorium, had bowed her head upon her breast, appearing more overpowered than ever, now lifted her eyes, and raising them one instant towards Heaven:

"Come, Eva," said she, lowering her glances, and looking affectionately at the old servant, as if expecting relief to come through her, "commence this story again, Basilide and Lactorium have never heard it, and Aula and myself are not acquainted with all the details. We are afflicted and very sad; this will be, judging by the gaiety thou hast excited among thy companions, one means of distracting our thoughts a little, and edifying us also."

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* Paula, in utroque sexu, servos et ancillas in fratres sororesque mutaverat. St. Jerome, Lib. III, Epist. VIII ad Eustochium.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SINGULAR HISTORY.*

RISING from amidst the group of servants, Eva approached the high back chair, "cathedra," upon which was seated Aula Plautia Laterana, and whence she presided over this intimate reunion.

But before allowing Eva to speak, we must, in a few words, describe her position in this noble dwelling, where she had already lived a long time, and give some idea of the mysterious, retired existence she led there.

Plautia and Aula showed, under all circumstances, a singular respect for this humble servant, and exacted for her of others the same testimony of esteem. Eva, on the contrary, wished to steal away from notice. She endeavored to be absolutely unknown; despite the will of her mistress, she banished herself to the lowest rank in the house, and nothing could prevent her mingling with the servants of these two noble matrons, and acquitting herself like them, of the most painful duties belonging to this humiliating condition.

She had only accepted the great liberty, most willingly bestowed upon her, of doing as she pleased, that she might employ it, for the benefit of those by whom she was sur-

* The picture we draw in this chapter and the following, on the education of courtesans, belongs to our subject, for at all times, has the Money God precipitated his adorers into these vices. Moreover, it was interesting to show (what has happened more than once) how a courtesan could, from the abyss of depravity and infamy in which she was plunged, rise even to the glory of martyrdom.

What, also, can inspire a true pity for these victims of a monstrous immorality is, that they did not belong to themselves. They were slaves, and obliged to submit to the fate imposed upon them.

We will not embarrass ourselves by proving all the details we have mentioned. We shall not do so, because of grave inconveniences, that notes upon the subject would present. We shall simply say, by way of explaining why, in infancy, the courtesans were trained to such relentless sentiments, that they were the objects of two kinds of sale or traffic on the part of slave dealers. Indeed, when profitable to the latter, they were sold indefinitely; when a temporary sale proved more profitable, they were sold thus. It was, especially, in view of these temporary sales, the conditions, and even exact words of which, are found in certain authors, that courtesans were pre-disposed, by the education we have endeavored to depict, to that frightful insensibility and cupidity, upon which were founded their master's hopes of enormous gains. We will find in this work a picture of these two situations, and the reader can testify, that in the sketch of these vices of civilization our subject imposes upon us, we have not passed certain limits, and our expressions are irreproachable.

rounded, encouraging them in their labors which she assisted, or consoling and comforting them in afflictions and sickness.

Eva never went out, talked but little, and seemed to avoid all attention, but she watched for all and over all with great solicitude, and when there appeared no longer the slightest want to be provided for, retiring to the most secret part of the house, she buried herself afar from all in prayer and tears. Very often had she thus spent long nights, reviewing her past life before God, despite the remonstrances of Plautia and Aula; at length they ceased their entreaties, no longer forbidding these vigils and practices, with the motives of which they were partially acquainted, and which but increased the respect they already felt for her.

At this epoch, in a great number of Christian families were individuals of an apparently humble condition, who were treated with the greatest respect that, in secret, amounted even to homage. These were "the Confessors of the Faith" who had escaped the rage of tyrants in the preceding persecution, and we shall probably be enlightened by Eva's narrative, accompanied by a picture of her former disgraceful life, as to whether such was, indeed, the cause of the veneration testified for her

Whatever it may be, Basilide and Lactorium who, by reason of her silent and retired life, had never particularly noticed this woman of an advanced age and truly strange aspect, now by the flickering light of lamps, enveloping her at once in shade and light, examined her with a curious attention, in the pensive and recollected attitude she had chosen.

Eva was standing, but her body was bent, and resting upon the table where were scattered the spindles, distaffs filled with wool, fabrics begun, and other objects of work that had been the evening's employment.

She was, in reality, a woman of forty-eight or fifty years, but so much broken down, either by grief or the hard labors of servitude, that we would easily have said she was fifteen or twenty years older.

For a long time, her hair had been white; parted in two smooth bands on each side of her temples, it was curled and floated down like flakes of snow upon her emaciated

cheeks, furrowed with deep wrinkles, and of that transparent, yellow hue, which seemed to deny the presence of blood and life.

We could have said she was one of those shades that ancient mythology used to place near the funeral urns, or rather one of those mysterious apparitions evoked (say the first Christian legends) from the tombs of martyrs in the obscure night of the catacombs.

Eva, during the moment of profound silence, following that in which she had been invited by her noble mistress to relate her history, remained buried in thought, in the painful task of slowly collecting the events of her past life.

Then casting a clear and penetrating glance upon the countenances of the four matrons, who, on their part, allowed not one of her movements, even the most insignificant, to escape their notice, she heaved a deep sigh, and without any other preface, in a grave and strongly accented voice, notwithstanding her apparent debility, she began. all her auditors manifesting the utmost attention.

"I do not know either where I was born or who were my parents. My first recollections date from the moment when I began to understand that I had an existence, and then I found myself in a house in a city, the name of which was unknown to me till a long time afterwards. Here were collected together about twenty young girls of different ages, the eldest not beyond twelve years.

"All these young girls were charming, and of such perfection of form, as I have never since met in any country or in any other person.

"It is impossible to give even an idea of the luxury which surrounded us, or the superabundant material enjoyments.

"Our garments were made of the most precious stuffs; they were constantly renewed, and we were loaded with jewels and costly frivolities of the utmost magnificence. Every morning, after a long sleep upon downy beds, our waiting women bathed us all in the perfumed waters of a large basin which filled the 'atrium' of our house, and from the centre of which rose up to a great height a powerful jet of water, afterwards falling upon us in a sweet rain impregnated with the most aromatic odors. We went out

from this refreshing bath, almost intoxicated, and extended languidly on thick woolen fleeces, were rubbed a long time with large towels, made of the finest hair, and, like the atmosphere we breathed, impregnated with the penetrating odor of the sweetest essences.

"Repasts, dances accompanied by music, diversions of every nature followed, and consumed the remainder of the day.

"These varied enjoyments, moreover, were skillfully ordered, and when a little further advanced in years, I soon understood that they tended to but one end, the increase of that beauty, and the perfecting of that delicacy of form with which, unhappily for us, we had all (though of different types) been so admirably provided by nature.

"Thus our repasts, always exquisite, were now light, now substantial; sometimes composed only of eggs and a kind of food made of milk, and sweetened by mixing it with honey; sometimes, on the contrary, highly seasoned meats, prepared in the most appetizing manner, were placed before us, and wines, the most heating, poured into our cups. that we might be stimulated to eat abundantly.

"Besides, in our dances, they endeavored, above all, to teach us the art of strange attitudes and voluptuous positions; to imitate, as it were, the undulating motions of those serpents which, before crushing their prey try to fascinate them by looks and deceitful movements.

"You will soon know what was done for our souls, and how all the inclinations of our hearts were directed. The only culture my mind received from the women who served us, was learning to speak Latin as well as Greek, which latter was, I believe, my native idiom, and to understand it without effort. and whilst engaged in play with my childish companions.

"They carefully watched over our conversations and language, not to forbid improper speeches and words of double meaning which, on the contrary, afforded them pleasure, but to teach us elegance and propriety of terms, 'for,' said they incessantly, 'at Rome, incorrect or negligent expressions would not be tolerated.'

"Neither I, nor any of my young companions, knew exactly what this Rome was these women continually talked

of in their enthusiastic narrations; but our curiosity was ardently excited, our desires and aspirations became, every day, more and more impatient, before these enticing pictures, and enchanting views of which they gave us but a vague glimpse.

"They told us, that in this immense city, dazzling with splendor, whither they would one day take us to live, all would prostrate themselves at our feet, to deposit there the treasures of earth—that we would be as divinities to whom altars were erected, our days would be but a succession of festivals, and we would sovereignly dispose of fortune, of life, of the greatest happiness, and the most powerful misery.

"But I perceive I am a little too fast in this story of my life, for it was not at first they presented these illusions, or gave us these lessons.

"There were, indeed, two very distinct classes among the young children, of whom I formed a part. We remained in the first until a certain age, or, rather, a certain period determined by a person who appeared in our midst from time to time—and then commenced a life that I cannot recollect without shuddering, although it afforded me—I say it to my shame—the greatest satisfaction and enjoyment.

"As long as the voice of this man had not pronounced our doom, as long as he had not designated and marked out for us another fate, we were abandoned to ourselves, delivered to our instincts, knowing nothing of life, except its appetites, exhausting or refusing them at will, passing continually from one caprice to another, sometimes enervated by excessive enjoyment, sometimes strengthened and fortified by the privations to which we submitted in yielding to the persuasions of two or three middle-aged women, who watched over and took care of us in the manner I have described.

"But when a sovereign order had destined us to the second life, and we were taken to another part of the house, the veil falling, a strange initiation replaced the apparent and calculated abandonment of us in our early years, and by paths always blooming with luxury and enchanting pleasures, we were led, almost insensibly, to the depths of depravity and infamy.

"I noticed at once, that these young girls, living in the midst of this place of desolation, were put, two by two,

under the immediate charge of an old woman who never quitted them an instant. It was thus I had to obey one named Mygdon, who immediately took possession of me, giving me for a companion a charming child just my own age (eight years), that had been placed under her charge some days previous, and was called Stella, sweet Latin name, expressive of her surpassing beauty—star of the morning, shining in the clear depths of a blue sky.

"This Mygdon, who had lived at Rome the life she promised us, and for which she was charged to prepare us, was but forty years old, and yet, at that age, she was even more haggard, more decrepid than I am now. What had once been a divinity incensed by the crowd, and covered with flowers, was now but a hideous Harpy, horrible to the sight, defiling to the touch.

"I had been in the power of this woman some time, and must say that, notwithstanding the sentiments of disgust her repulsive appearance excited in me, I had experienced from her nothing but praises and caresses, when one day reappeared the master of this dwelling, he who, a short time before, had decided that I would commence my new existence, he before whom all in this accursed place trembled and bowed down, from Mygdon and the other old creatures, even to the youngest of their victims.

"This man was called Chaerestrate."

At this name Eva, as if no longer able to continue her story, stopped and appeared completely overcome.

An extreme agitation suddenly seized upon her. Her startled gaze, distended by a secret terror, remained strangely fixed upon an invisible point, her hands stiffened and extended, seemed combating and repulsing a menacing phantom. It was evident that the name pronounced by this old servant had awakened the most cruel recollections, and had suddenly evoked, rendering them, in a manner, present to her sight, all the misery, all the heart-rending anguish of a past as sorrowful as it was terrible.

Aula Plautia Laterana, her daughter Aula, and her two friends, Basilide and Lactorium, were deeply touched, and hastened to lavish upon this poor woman, almost lying at their feet, their most affectionate assistance. Aided by the other servants companions of Eva, they lifted her up, and

placing her upon a chair, endeavored to restore animation. When their efforts appeared successful, Plautia, the noble matron, gently tried to persuade her not to continue a story which affected her so deeply.

"No, mistress," quickly answered Eva, "this night is one of tears for you, as well as for me, and since you have determined to pass it afar from your couch, whence sorrow would banish sleep, it will be long enough for me to exhaust entirely the bitter cup you have asked me to taste. I have stifled my sorrows a long time, let me now reveal them, and solace myself by pouring them into your heart."

And the old servant, recovering herself, resumed the standing position she had lately occupied, her penetrating eyes, however, still fixed upon a vague point, and before continuing her story, she was heard to murmur, in a low voice:

"Ah! that man! it was he who, after selling me, stole my two children, my twins, whom together I had fed with my milk, and whom for three years I had covered with my caresses!"

CHAPTER IX.

LOVE AND HATRED.

"WHEN this man entered," said Eva, resuming her narrative at the point where she had discontinued, "he gave vent to his usual coarse giggle, which I had already heard, and making an imperious gesture, commanded that we should all, accompanied by the women who tended us, be assembled around him.

"As soon as the circle of enchanting young girls and hideous old creatures was formed, he examined us with the most scrutinizing attention, sometimes shaking his head as if dissatisfied, and sometimes laughing aloud as if delighted.

"'He! he! he!' said he, at length, addressing our servants, 'do they fight well? Do they bite, scratch, tear the skin? Which is the most wicked? Is it Ephy or Læda? Phœbe or Mysis? Come, now, and let her speak.'

"One of the servants then selected from the ranks a very little girl, the smallest among us, and said:

"'It is Phyle! She always aims at the eyes, and if we did not watch her, she would dig them out, with nothing but a thrust of her thumb!'*

"'Ah! ah! ah! What a little devil! Very well, my dear one, but thou shalt be whipped, even till the blood comes, for I do not wish that here, understandest thou well? The eyes! Ah! the eyes! when they are gone, nothing can put them back! I do not want your eyes to be touched, your lips to be torn, your ears to be pulled, or your teeth to be broken! None of these things can be mended. But of bruises, wounds, blood, yes, blood, as much as you please! With milk and honey, oil and wine, water and a few herbs, a salve can be made, which will heal all, so that no marks will appear. Play with your feet, play with your nails, play with all your little pointed hooks, but by the blonde Aphrodite! take care of your eyes, your lips, your teeth, your ears, or woe betide you! Phyle, my little Fury, thou shalt be whipped twice for having forgotten this!'

"And now we heard again that stupid, ferocious laugh, as if he were enchanted with his own odious words. After giving full vent to his laughter, turning to my side, he addressed Mygdon:

"'And, Selene,' said he, 'how is she progressing? has she commenced?'

"It was the first time any one had ever given me a name, until then, I had had none.

"Mygdon answered:

"'Not yet, but she will. We must have time for everything.'

"'Knowest thou, Mygdon,' said this man, putting his hand under my chin, and holding up my head, whilst he attentively considered my features, 'knowest thou that Selene will be my pearl? I recommend her to thee.'

"And he went out.

"Some days afterwards, on awaking, I was very much surprised to find that Mygdon had taken away my costly garments, and clothed me in some mean, ragged stuffs, whilst Stella, on the contrary, was arrayed in dazzling clothes, and covered with sparkling jewels. At the same

*Tantæ feritatis erat, ut infestis digitis, ora et oculos simul iudentium infantium incesserit. (Suetonius, in Caligula, 25.)

time, Mygdon studiously avoided speaking a word to me, but covered Stella with caresses.

"Several times during the day she treated me harshly for the least thing, she gave me the coarsest food, but reserved every kind of delicacy for Stella. I cannot describe what I suffered. I was envious of Stella, and began to hate her. I continually asked myself the meaning of Mygdon's conduct, for I repeat it, until then I had never had cause to complain. That evening, as she undressed me for bed, I said to her:

"'What is the matter, Mygdon?'

"'With me? nothing.'

"'What have I done?'

"'I know nothing about it; you must ask Stella.'

"'Ask Stella! What could she tell me?'

"'Stella says that thou hast complained to Chaerestrate about me.'

"'To Chaerestrate! Stella lied!'

"'I do not know that Stella lied, but I do know that Chaerestrate had me whipped for what thou didst tell him.'

"'I swear to thee it is not true. Could Chaerestrate then have you whipped?'

"'Chaerestrate is my master as well as thine, he is master of all who are here.'

"'So then, Mygdon, thou lovest me no more?'

"'I hate thee.'

"'And I, who felt so kindly towards Stella?'

"'Well! Stella does not love thee, that's all!'

"Whereupon, Mygdon put me to bed, and withdrew immediately, hoping that the night would finish her work.

"I did not then know, that the demon of revenge could take possession of the slumbers of children, as it does those of wicked, malicious, avaricious men. The heavy sleep, which closed my eyes, opened my mind and heart to every transport of jealousy, every emotion of vengeance. In dreams, I threw myself upon Stella, burying my nails in her flesh, and tearing it to shreds. And behold what I did the very morning after this night, passed in the delirious visions of a bloody nightmare. At the moment when Mygdon, having put in my hands a hard piece of thick, black bread, held to the lips of Stella a cake kneaded of

white flour and perfumed honey, I rushed at Stella, snatching from her mouth the first morsel she had tasted, and with the rest of the cake, crushed it under my feet. I afterwards threw around her my trembling arms, tore to pieces her rich clothing, and endeavored to find on her naked chest, the place where I could harm her most. Meanwhile, she did not remain inactive. This child, whom I had thought sweet and gentle, seized me with such powerful strength, that I was overcome, and reeling, fell with her upon the ground. I screamed; in falling, one of my legs being within her reach, she buried her teeth in it, and there, with a savage joy, remained immovable. By a convulsive movement, I succeeded in seizing one tress of her long hair, and pulled it with fury to make her relax her hold on me. In turn, she uttered a cry that released me, and I saw in my hand, all red with blood, the tress I had snatched.

"Then recommenced between us a mute struggle, like that of two reptiles entangled in their contortions. They made a circle round us, and applauded. We heard the harsh voices of our old servants encouraging us to heavier blows, and the enthusiastic exclamations of the little girls, our young companions, sometimes extolling Selene, and sometimes Stella, both names resounding frequently during the various phases of this combat. At the end of a long time, they lifted us up, covered with perspiration and blood, and almost inanimate. Our strength was exhausted, but our rage not appeased, and they separated us because we could fight no longer.

"Mygdon was triumphant. I do not know whether, in the end, I proved myself the strongest or most cruel, but I felt, from the manner in which she bathed my wounds, and staunched my blood, whilst almost neglecting Stella, that I had regained her esteem, and would henceforth be the favorite.

"Indeed, the next day, not only was there no more question of mean clothing and privations, but I had become the heroine of a truly memorable event. Mygdon did not speak of me except with pride; Mygdon presented me as a prodigy to my little companions and the old servants; Mygdon stifled me with kisses and caresses, and, at certain moments, an

one would have called her a fool, for she would suddenly dance around me with cries of delirious joy, with gestures and ecstasies, as if she were mad! What pleased me most, amidst the compliments I received, and the adulation lavished on me, even more than my restoration to favor with all, particularly with Mygdon, was to see Stella crouched in a corner, still weeping over her wounds, forgotten by every one, abashed, not daring to lift her eyes from the ground on which they were fixed.

"Well! would it be believed? Not two weeks had passed, when Stella and I loved each other anew, and with more ardor than we had ever shown, even in the first moments when fate had united us. This transformation, after so much hatred, was the work of another artifice of Mygdon. This strange woman handled good, as she did evil, with the same sovereign persuasion, the same irresistible impulses. She knew the plants which distill poison and swell the heart; she also knew those which gladden the heart, and soothe its wild throbbings.

"When our sky was pure, she excited a storm; and an instant after she parted the sombre clouds and restored its azure hue.

"Truly was she the fatal Circe of our old fables, changing us sometimes into savage beasts, sometimes into charming young girls.

"Moreover, what passed between Stella and me, also took place between Ephy and Læda, Phœbe and Mysis, governed by other Mygdons, and agitated by the same alternations of love and hatred.

"The little Phyle, that wicked child who leaped for joy at the most bloody sights, did not herself escape. Like us, she had her hours of sweet and peaceful joys; like us, her hours of malicious, convulsive transports. Often, I know not under what accursed influence, we felt ourselves carried away by sudden paroxysms of strange irritation, that urged us to rush upon one another, and battle with fury, our odious followers looking on with inexpressible delight; often, we presented the enchanting spectacle of the Elysian Fields, where the shades of the good, wrapt in an unalterable peace, together ramble over flowery meads.

"But, alas! we were only a flock of savage little pan-

thers, shut up in one enclosure, and to whom the warm exhalations of the same consuming sun communicated either spontaneous rage or tenderness—now devouring one another, and now embracing with the most passionate and perfidious caresses.

"Such is the life I led for more than five long years; life of love and hatred, life of crushing despair and delirious joy, life in which there was no vacancy, for it was filled either with the tempest's tumultuous groanings, or the pleasant murmurs of serene days.

"However, I was a long time without knowing the secret.

"Once, when Mygdon, having rudely struck me without cause, as she frequently did, afterwards dressed the wounds, and kissed them, with tears in her eyes, I said to her:

"'Mygdon, if thou lovest me why dost thou do me ill?'

"Her gaze, hard and penetrating, was plunged, for some time, into the depths of my blue eyes, as if seeking there an answer to my question; then satisfied, no doubt, with her examination, she exclaimed:

"'I love thee, and I hate thee!'

"And almost without stopping, she continued, in a low voice:

"'I hate thee because thou art young, and because thou art beautiful! because thou wilt soon have all the gold I have had, and all the enjoyments I have no longer! because thou wilt be loved and I am hated! because thou wilt command and I serve! because—but what good is all this? I should not finish. Indeed, I hate thee with all the ruined powers of my soul, all the vanished sentiments of my heart! I hate thee, I love thee! I love thee, because thou art, what I once was, as relentless as thou art young, as depraved as thou art beautiful! I love thee, because thou art my vengeance! I love thee, because in my sleepless nights I will think of the evil thou wilt do, and because, in my lonely days, I shall see from afar the ruin thou wilt accomplish! I love thee, because it is I who have clothed thee with thy tunic of fire! tunic that could no more be taken from thee than could that of Nessus.'

"Mygdon stopped, but she had not finished.

"'Selene,' said she, at the end of a few minutes, during

which I regarded her with stupor and fright, 'thou art a "hetaire, hetaire," in Greece, courtesan at Rome, priestess of Venus everywhere, or, rather, fervent devotee of Plutus, the Money God! Thou must love and thou must hate, thou must attract and thou must repulse, thou must inflame and thou must freeze, thou must stifle with tenderness and thou must devour with rage! When thou art loved, when gold is lavished upon thee, when thou art drowned in pleasure, thou must think continually, that another would love thee more, that another would give thee more gold, that another would better satisfy thy caprices. And then thou wilt hate with all the passion of which thou art deprived, with all the gold thou wishest but hast not, with all the unsatisfied pleasures thou wilt dream of! Thou art ready, Selene, ready for the evil to which I have formed thee! Thus have I trained thee in love and hatred, and thus wilt thou repay my care in loving and hating me, as I have loved and hated thee! Not long, and thy destiny will be accomplished!'"

CHAPTER X.

A SINCERE YOUNG MAN.

INDEED, I was not long in perceiving that Chaerestrate, who had not ceased to reappear among us at intervals more or less distant, now returned oftener than usual, almost always accompanied by a young man with whom he appeared to be on the best terms.

"This young man, bearing the ridiculous name of Sotades, did not redeem the slight disadvantage of his appellation by an agreeable exterior. He was short, rather fat, and his placid physiognomy reflected only the vague agitation of sentimental reveries. But it was said he was rich and of a good family in the city. It was then, for the first time, I learned that we were at Thebes, where Chaerestrate had one of his principal establishments.

"After Sotades had been visiting us some time in company with our master, I remarked that he noticed me more than all the other courtesans, and often passed long moments in mute contemplation of my person. This caused me to

laugh immoderately, for I attached no importance to the young man, and would not have imagined that he could even think of me.

"One day, however, I heard Chaerestrate say to him:

"'Well, Sotades, which one dost thou wish to buy of me?'

"'Selene.'

"'Selene! Thou wishest to buy Selene? I pity thee.'

"'Why?'

"'Because thou art not rich enough to pay me for her.'

"'What is thy price?'

"'Twice her weight in gold.'

"'Twice her weight in gold! It is impossible!'

"'It is what I have said. Renounce Selene; there are others who will not cost so much.'

"'I want Selene. Thou didst jest when speaking of gold. Never was a courtesan sold at such a price.'

"'When Selene is in Rome, whither I am going to take her soon, it is not twice but twenty times her weight in gold she will sell for. Decide then, reflection does but persuade me to increase my demand.'

"'Thou shalt have thy price.'

"'When?'

"'I ask but eight days.'

"'Eight days, then; the ninth, Selene leaves for Rome.'

"At the prescribed time, Sotades returned with Chaerestrate. Scales were brought, and I, on one side, was twice weighed down by the gold this young fool deposited in the other.

"At the last movement of the balance, Chaerestrate said, speaking to Sotades:

"'That is the weight. Selene is thine; thou canst take her away.'

"'Come, Selene,' said Sotades, 'thou seest what gold I have given for thee; dost thou love me?'

"'I? I hate thee!'

"And I burst out laughing. All the other courtesans imitated me, and Chaerestrate himself participated in the general hilarity. Mygdon (will it be believed?) did not, but seemed very much affected and retired into a corner, shedding abundant tears. I did not think that God, who

often makes a flower spring up in the crevice of a rock, had touched the heart of this poor woman and there planted the germ of true tenderness. This dwelling, in which I had passed ten years, I left without saying one word to her, without giving her a look even, and laughing, followed Sotades, my head thrown back and lip disdainfully curled. I never saw Mygdon again.

"The life I led with Sotades can be imagined. The wretch was ruined in buying me. He had sold all his possessions, and it was the price of them he had put in the balance. His house, nevertheless, remained. It was there he conducted me, and we lived very plainly upon some remnants of fortune collected here and there.

"What a life for a courtesan accustomed to the luxurious dwelling of Chaerestrate, and who had heard of nothing but marvelous splendor! Where was that Rome which, without Sotades, I would soon have known, and which with him was but an impossible dream? And that gold in which I was to swim? And those endless pleasures? Those intoxicating homages? That sovereign power of my youth and beauty? And that love? And that hate? Now, all this would not be! No, never should I see Rome, never should I have gold, never pleasure, never adoration, never power, never love, never hatred! I would wear myself out in my impotence! I would consume myself in my rage! Oh! Sotades!

"Unfortunate being, he loved me! I was his divinity! His house was a temple; upon my altars he would have shed his blood! Denuded temple, altar without victim! for Sotades was to me no more than the vilest animal, and I would have laughed at his ridiculous immolation. Sotades was plunged into despair. Prostrate at my feet, he said to me:

"'Selene, hast thou no heart? What can I do for thee, that I have not done?'

"'Ah! one thing, thou hast not done, that thou canst do.'

"'What?'

"'Give me liberty, or sell me again to Chaerestrate.'

"'Never!'

"'Never! Then, I do not pity thee!'

"Meanwhile, our last resources were exhausted, and we were bordering upon misery. Sotades could no longer bor-

row, his poverty was known to every one. He sold his house, the only thing left of his fortune, and rented one for us to occupy. One day he came home, beaming with animation and hope.

"'I have become a banker,' said he, 'thou wishest gold, I will give it to thee. When thou hast that, thou wilt love me, perhaps. Let me have time to learn this occupation, afterwards I will take thee to Rome, where I shall establish myself upon the Forum and where thou shalt live in splendor.'

"'At Rome, as at Thebes, I shall hate thee! I am thy slave, and thou wouldst have me for thyself. I wish to belong to myself, and to bestow myself upon him who would appear pleasing to me. A banker! thou a banker,' exclaimed I, bursting into an insulting laugh with which always overwhelmed Sotades. 'What good news! Sotades a banker! Behold me, indeed, in opulence! Ah! ah! ah!'

"Nevertheless, the first operations of Sotades were not so bad. He had a certain crafty good nature, with an apparent candor, which supplied the place of real skill and brought him quite a number of clients. Poverty betook itself from our dwelling, and was replaced by ease—a niggardly ease that irritated me almost as much as all our past privations.

"'And Rome,' said I to him from time to time, when I saw that he had succeeded and we were in no need of money, 'when wilt thou take me to Rome?'

"It was the only promise of Sotades I had remembered, the only word to which I had paid attention. I had reflected, and said to myself, that although I should always be under the yoke of Sotades, yet at Rome there was more hope of my obtaining freedom than elsewhere, and, perhaps, of enjoying, at some future day, that delightful life so much talked of by Mygdon.'

"'We shall go there,' answered Sotades. 'Be sure, Selene, that I think of it both for thee and me.'

"Yet as time passed on I still saw myself in this odious little city of Thebes, sometimes in poverty, sometimes in comparative affluence, according to the good or bad luck of Sotades in business. If I could only have been relieved of his ridiculous love and wearisome demonstrations! but this

love increased continually, and these extravagant demonstrations knew no bounds. I said to myself, with terror, that my youth, which ought to be the happiest and brightest period of my life, would be spent with this abhorred master —that the disgust I felt and tears I shed would soon efface all traces of my striking beauty. There were days when I seemed transported with rage, days when I wished I could put an end to Sotades and myself too. Like a wild beast, confined in an iron cage, I paced up and down the bounds of my prison nursing my bloody desires and disordered appetites! How often did I attempt to burst the fetters depriving me of liberty! But Sotades was always watching and always made his appearance at the moment marked out for deliverance. At the end of a long time he resumed that joyous air and that look, beaming with hope, which bespoke a mind exempt from the pre-occupation of pecuniary cares. I felt that he had something new and pleasant to communicate, perhaps he was about to redeem his promise. Indeed, it was not long before he said to me :

" ' We leave, Selene.'.

" 'Ah! we are going to Rome?'

" ' No. I am going to Thrace with thee.'.

" ' To Thrace! What a singular idea!'

" ' No, it is a golden idea.'

" ' Thou art jesting, certainly.'

" Then, without answering, he drew from under his garments a big bag filled with shining pieces of gold ; pouring them out before my eyes, he said in a serious tone and profoundly earnest manner :

" ' Listen to me attentively, Selene. Thou seest this bag; it is all I have been able to gain at Thebes and in Greece after a long time and many efforts to realize thy dreams. Well,—I know what I say—in Thrace it will take me but a year to make five times this miserable sum ; thence I go to Rome and establish myself at an important stand upon the Forum. It is by Thrace we are to reach Rome ; in Thrace we lay the foundation of our opulence; and in Thrace, I hope thou wilt begin to love me.'

" I repeat it. Sotades spoke with so much persuasion in his voice and manner, that instead of being irritated as usual at his last words, I answered, almost smiling :

"'And what, then, is there so wonderful in Thrace to promise such results? I have always heard that it was a miserable country.'

"'Hast thou heard,' replied Sotades, 'of those places where Rome, rejecting the scum of her overflowing population, transports that multitude of beggars, strangers, barbarians, vagabonds, swarming within her walls, and to whom she cannot, as formerly, give bread and the sports of the amphitheatre? There are in Illyria, Thrace, and other countries as far distant from the metropolis, vast domains derisively adorned by the Romans with the antique name of colonies; here thousands of wretches, without country, without family, and under the iron yoke of a merciless master ("dominus fundi") either an ancient Roman patrician or rich plebeian, are slaves ("servi terræ") of the earth, attached to the soil where they are condemned to take root, and live only for the sake of the tribute to be wrenched from them. Thou wishest to know something of Rome, Selene, so do I. It is in Thrace we shall have the foretaste. There thou wilt see master and slave approaching one another by their vices, and yet separated by that impassable barrier Rome, relentless city, has always interposed between insolent pride and shamefaced poverty; between boundless power and unwilling servitude; the slave a prey to want, the master succumbing to desires; both devoured by sordid appetites, dreaming in their exile, forced or voluntary, of naught but the mire of Rome and the means of replunging into it —the same avidity for gold, the master never having enough and the slave aspiring to the handling of only a few pieces. Dost thou understand now, and wilt thou still doubt? Seest thou what can be made by penetrating into these hearts, open to all consuming desires, and descending, this bag in hand, into that fathomless abyss of passions and corrupt distress?'

"'Thou art right! Sotades,' exclaimed I, interrupting him. 'Let us start; yes, let us start for Thrace. I will go whenever thou wishest.'

"Unhappy wretch! His troubles began; I believe that I hated him less

CHAPTER XI.

A PENITENTIAL COLONY.

IN the most northern part of Thrace, upon the frozen steeps of Mount Haemus, amidst those vast spaces bounded south by the river Articus, east by that chain of mountains crossing Haemus and descending along the coast of the Euxine Sea even to Byzantium, west by the river Hebrus, more than thirty years ago, there extended, and still extends, an immense estate, then owned by Aclius Gaurus, after his ruin bought by Fulgentius, your noble spouse, my dear mistress, and now about to become the property of your son's creditor, Ctesiphon.

"It costs me a great deal to remind you of those painful things, but you know it was from this place I came to Rome, not to realize the dreams of an ardent imagination, and receive the homages paid there to its divinities of flesh and corruption, but, devoid of youth and beauty, to be your slave; humble and repentant; redeemed from my vices and consoled for my miseries; transformed by the all-powerful grace of God; a Christian, and, in a word (shall I say it?), almost a martyr!

"I do not know, however, but what I ought to stop here."

"And why," said Plautia, smiling at her old servant, "shouldst thou not continue? We have now arrived at the edifying part of thy history and thou wouldst withhold it! It will be very instructive and profitable for us to know how, from a miserable courtesan, thou hast become what thou hast just said, and—"

"And the famous story of the wind squall that I have promised my two friends and which amused thy companions so much," cried Aula, interrupting her mother; "didst thou believe that we would let thee off with that! No indeed! Come, sit down and continue. The night is not gone and we are all very attentive."

"Oh! yes," said Basilide and Lactorium together, and handing Eva a chair they forced her, notwithstanding her unwillingness, to take a seat and rest her fatigued body.

"It was in this domain," continued the old servant, "that Sotades settled, coming from Apollonia where we landed after a long and dangerous voyage on the Euxine Sea.

"Apollonia is a little sea-port situated beyond the chain of mountains I have already mentioned as dividing Haemus, and, with Adrianapolis and Byzia, is one of the few cities in this part of Thrace. This country truly answers the description given by one of your poets Winter succeeds winter; * the rivers and even the sea freeze three times a year; † snow covers the plains with a hardened crust that neither sun nor rains can dissolve; ‡ wine freezes in the cups § and hangs from the lips like fragments of big rubies. The sterile soil produces nothing but what might be expected from so rough a nature; no golden harvests; only a few defective fruits suspended from the slender branches of the trees and which a pale sun never ripens. ‖

"And what shall I say of the men? The poet I have cited does not judge them worthy that name, ¶ he compares them to rapacious wolves incessantly in quest of prey, ** and then he referred to the original inhabitants, not knowing those transplanted thither by the policy of Rome, and who, to the ferocious manners of these ancient inhabitants, joined the shameful vices of a degrading civilization. Their houses, resembling the caves of wild beasts, scarcely afforded shelter from the furious north winds, the excessive rains inundating them and the rigorous climate.

"Such is the place where, on leaving Greece, Sotades and I lived.

"At first I fell into a bitter despondency, without strength to complain, without energy to curse.

"I hated Sotades more and more, but I saw less of him for he was engrossed with the cares attendant upon his efforts at making a fortune. Attentively looking around me, I gradually saw that my solitude could be enlivened, my disgust and weariness alleviated. I began to believe that Rome was not, indeed, absent from these places, and that certain of her seductions had penetrated there.

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* Iners hyemi continatur hyems. (Ovid, Ep. ex Ponto, Lib. I, v. 26)
† Ovid, Trist. Lib. V, Eleg. 10, verse 1.
‡ Ovid, Trist. Lib. III, Eleg. 10. v. 13 et seq.
§ Ovid, Ep. ex Ponto, Lib. IV, v. 8; Trist. Lib. III, Eleg. 10. v. 23.
‖ Pomp. Meta, Lib. II, cap. 2.
¶ Ovid, Trist. Lib. V, Eleg. VII, v. 15.
** Epist. de Ponto, Lib. I, ep. 2, vers. 29.

"I have mentioned Aelius Gaurus, the master of this estate upon which we had erected our miserable dwelling; and this is the opportunity, I think, of giving some account of the chief of the Roman colony and the multitude of unhappy wretches, enslaved to the soil ('glebis inhærentes'), obliged, by a pitiless decree, to endure the burden of its most exacting laws. This Aelius Gaurus, a newly-enriched plebeian (acquiring his wealth, we know not how, like many others), lived in the midst of this desolate country with all the insolent pride of an upstart. He inhabited a magnificent dwelling, and was surrounded by innumerable slaves—it could not be said that the misery and distress reigning around him equalled the accumulated superfluities and pleasures of his luxurious life. This man was young and of a pleasing appearance, without fear of the gods, dreaded afar, inspiring with terror the wretches who, scattered upon his domains, knew no law but his will, no rule but that of his impetuous caprices.

"Scarcely had he seen me, when attracting his notice, he conceived the design of carrying me off from Sotades; and this plan appeared easy to execute as, on my part, I was anxious to exchange my detestable condition for one of which I was beginning to get a glimpse. However, in spite of this man's omnipotent and frantic ardor, in spite of my connivance, a long time elapsed during which we were constrained, he to delay the execution of his projects, I to curb my impatience. I was, indeed, the slave of Sotades; he had bought me at a price which showed the depth of his foolish love; despite my disdain, my rebuffs, my hatred, his passion for me had not diminished; on the contrary, it was more and more inflamed; and nothing in the world would have induced him to part with me, especially to give me up to another.

"Sotades, who had promptly divined the intentions of Aelius Gaurus, and could not doubt mine, watched over us both with a solicitude and precaution that no manœuvres could defeat; and I am going to explain how he was able, notwithstanding the immense power enjoyed in this country by the owner of these colonial lands, to baffle and almost destroy every enterprise menacing, what he called, his happiness."

Here we must interrupt Eva's narrative and substitute our own language, opening a large parenthesis so as to give the reader the explanations, necessarily incomplete, that Eva herself could not make to the matrons around her.

The legislation of the Roman colonies was very complicated, and we, consequently, perceive why Eva could not well give a clearly defined account of it; on the other hand, speaking to women who were much better acquainted with the state of affairs than we are, rendered it unnecessary to insist upon certain details indispensable, however, for the ultimate understanding of some events developed in the course of our story.

However, in resuming the thread of Eva's narrative, we shall be as discreet as possible; and in the explanations, which we, at least, believe are not wanting in interest, we shall endeavor to give them as coming from her lips and still addressed to the attentive matrons.

"Thus," said she to them, "Rome—magnificent Rome—who, in her haughty pride, had naught for suffering humanity but crushing contempt, has always, on the contrary, watched, with a jealous care, over everything, far and near, relating to her inexorable power.

"In these countries, whither she transported the dregs of her population, she exercised no care over the people, delivering them up to the mercy of a master from whom she demanded not an account of his stewardship; but she protected herself against this master, never abandoning to his caprice the important tribute due from the colony to the prince.

"In spite of the various denominations which have been successively used to distinguish the colonists, there were truly but three classes, and, in reality, the condition of all was absolutely the same, although the law had consented to recognize, for the advantage of some among them, one of those apparent and derisive differences, the secret of which was, at all times, in possession of the jurisconsults.

"Thus we find among the colonies in Illyria, Thrace and Palestine, what are called the aborigines, the renumbered and the prescripts.

"The aborigines were those born in the colony of native parents renumbered or prescripts, or simply of a mother

belonging to one or the other of these three situations, for the rigorous principles of slavery* were most strictly applied to births, and, consequently, a child's civil position was always determined by that of the mother.†

"The renumbered ('censiti, adscriptitii') were those whom any offence whatever, for example, mendicity or vagabondage,‡ condemned to transportation in a colony, and who, on their arrival, were inscribed upon the public registers of the colony ('libris censualibus libris publicis'),§ and stamped with the indelible mark of the perpetual colonist ('perpetuo colonatu').

"Poverty without resources or other fatal circumstances, sometimes conducted into these places of eternal servitude, wretches who had hoped to find there, in tilling the ground, an alleviation of their woes, and who having once arrived, remained (notwithstanding their despair) by the force of habit or because no other place seemed to offer a milder lot. At the end of a thirty years' sojourn, either their own or that of their offspring, both were considered as definitely belonging to the colony and formed the class called prescripts.*[1]

"Only not being stigmatized with the mark of an anterior offence, they were not like the aborigines, slaves of punishment ('servi pœnæ'), though, at the same time, slaves of the land ('servi terræ'), and yet considered freeborn (videntur ingenui').[2]

"But what a mockery for men who were deprived of all their rights as citizens, even that of resorting for their own defence to any patronage whatever, and who, in every imaginable manner, were assimilated with ordinary slaves![3]

"Moreover, in reality, all difference was effaced between these three classes of wretches we have just named, and the public registers made no distinction.[4] By the profanation of a sacred term, the law declared them all 'offspring of the earth,'[5] because upon the books of the colony nothing

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* L. 21, 22, 24, Cod. of Agricola, on Cens. and Colo. principally for the aborigines; L. 10, eod. tit. See also Novel 156.

† Same laws and from Code of Liber. expositis; Nov. 54, proem. et cap. 1.

‡ L. Cod. of Mendic.

§ L. 4, 9, 10, de Agricola et censit.

*1—L. 18, 23, § 1, col. cit. 2—L. Cod of col. Thrac.; L. 23, § 1, de Agricola et cens. 3—L. 13, Cod. de Agric. et cens. L. Cod. Ut nemo ad patroc.: L. 11, 12, 21, de Agric. et cens. 4.—5—Dict. leg. et L. 13, eod. tit.

more than this was inscribed concerning their origin or parentage Indeed it was boldly said they were reputed as having sprung from the earth ('ex terra manare videntur').*[1] a hard step-mother to children of rock, and whose immobility was an image of perpetual servitude,[2] both for themselves and their descendants,[3] according to the principles of ordinary slavery.

"In consequence, and as inherents to the glebe ('glebis inhærentes')[4] with it, they were transmitted to another whenever the present one sold his domain or transferred it in any way whatever.†[1] Under no pretext could he reserve them to his own profit,[2] and all attempts at eluding, by fraud, these legislative enactments were severely punished.[3]

"The purchaser could, by a legal process, recover all serfs removed[4] from the land, and also bring suit against the harborer of a fugitive colonist.[5] Flight was considered a theft that the serf committed of his own person ('furtum committit ipsius'),[6] and the accomplice must pay to the treasury a compensation of twelve pounds of silver,[7] and also to the proprietor of the lands, an indemnity double or quadruple the fugitive's value,[8] according to the circumstances of the concealment and the distinctions of the law in cases of fraudulent substraction.

"So absolute was this act of revindication granted the possessor of colonial lands, that it knew no limits, either of time or place.[9] It reached the serf without his being able to oppose any obstacle. In whatever place he was found, with whatever dignity clothed, through ignorance of his true condition, they snatched him from the province or city in which he had taken refuge, from the seat of honor he had usurped, and cast him, when his origin had been proved, into the midst of those wretches that nothing could detach from the soil of which they were considered an integral, material portion, or, more odious still, its progeny, marked with an indellible, perpetual stigma.‡

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*1—L. 3, rod. tit. 2—Lex a majoribus constituta, colonos quodam æternitatis jure detinet. (L. Cod. de Colon. Palæst.) 3—L. 21, 22, 24, Cod. de Agric. et censit.; Novel. 54. 4—L. 15, eod. tit.

†1—L. 7, eod. tit. 2—7, eod. tit. 3—L. 13, § 1, eod. tit. 4—L. 12, eod. tit. 5—L. 23, eod. tit. 6—L. 12, eod. tit. 7—L. 12, eod. tit; L. de Colon. of Illyr. 8.—9—L. 7, de Agricol. et censit.; L. 6 et 16, eod. tit.

‡ Conf. L. 7, 8, 12, 14; 6, 16, Cod. de Agr. et censit.

"We can understand what family ties were among these unfortunate beings for whom the law reserved neither consolation nor hope. Indeed, if the master could enfranchise his slave, the proprietor had, in regard to his serf, no other privilege than that of delivering him from the yoke of one master, and transferring him, with the domain, to the authority ofanother.*

"The child was not the blessed fruit of its mother but a portion of the soil;† she who had given it birth claiming no attention from tho legislators, except so far as determining the place where it should be forever attached; and in cases of difficulty sons and daughters of the same mother were divided among divers claimants, as if they had been so many measures of the vilest grain.‡

"Unions among them were not, properly speaking, marriages, but like that of slaves, 'contubernia."§ There were, moreover, unions called "matrimonia obnoxia,"‖ this expresssing the relation of the colonial women to the proprietors of the estates. Such is the picture we must give of these colonies Rome had established in various places, principally in Thrace, Illyria, and Palestine.

"We now see how Sotades could restrain the power of Aelius Gaurus, and, at need, brave it innocently. Indeed the colonists did not, in reality, belong to the proprietor of the domain to which the public registers assigned them. They were, as we have already said, slaves of punishment as well as of the soil, but it was in the public interest that they adhere to the soil, which they were forced to cultivate as expiation of an anterior offence, real or assumed.¶

"The land owner could exercise towards them the omnipotent power of a master over his slaves, and the vigilant solicitude of a patron;** they must render to him an account

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*L. 21, in fine. This contains what we are going to say, that the colonist did not belong to the owner of the lands, but to the public—that his labor was due the public, and, represented by the rent, paid into the treasury of which he was the direct debtor.

†Dict. leg. et L. 21, 22, 23, 24, cod. tit. ‡Novel. 156, de Pro'e partiend i inter rust'cos. §Novel. 157, de Rust. qui in alien. prædiis nuptias co trahunt. ‖Suetonius in Caligula, cap. 40.

¶Real in those who were transported as beggars or vagabonds; assumed in those who, as descendants of the above mentioned, bore the punishment due their fathers.

**Eorum jure utuntur et patroni sollicitudine et domini potestate. L. cod. de colon. Thra. censibus.

of the productions of the land; *[1] but he could not transform their services into silver,[2] and these services were invariably denominated public duties[3] ('functiones publicæ'), because it was to the Prince and State their labor was due.

"Under this name, the colonist paid into the treasury an annual rent for which he was considered a direct and personal debtor to the prince. This was the principle, at least, which had first prevailed ("mos solitum"); but in act, and by derogation, the rent was paid the proprietor of the domain, who, reserving a part to himself, as representing the fruits of the land, poured the surplus into the fiscal chest, to the credit of the serf.[4] Much care was taken at Rome to watch over this important branch of public revenue. The master of the soil could abuse his serfs at will, no legal enactment opposing any obstacle to excesses the most odious; but every avenue of gain was shut the instant he undertook anything whatever beyond the strict limits drawn around his cupidity and personal ambition.†

"Moreover, above him in authority, were the moderator and judge of the province ("moderator provinciæ; judex provinciæ") sovereignly invested with the right of intervention whenever the interests of the Prince and State were compromised, or even simply menaced.‡

"Besides these, were a whole legion of census-takers, inspectors, collectors, and other public functionaries, who allowed no possibility of defrauding the treasury, by dissimulation in the number of colonists, or extent of land, the quantity of fruits produced, or importance of works accomplished.§

"But," said Eva, at the moment when we can connect her narrative with what we have just related, "Sotades, in landing at Apollonia, took care to confer with the moderator of the province, obtaining, by the help of gifts and promises, the title of peræquator and collector for the domain of Aelius Gaurus, who, consequently, obliged to settle accounts with Sotades, could not, with impunity, trifle with his authority."

*1 L. 2, cod. de Agric. et censit. 2. Ead. leg. 3. L. 20, § 3 et 4, Cod eod. tit.; L. 8 et 9, eod. tit. 4. L. 3, 5, 9, 12, 29, de Agr. et censit.

† See in confirmation of what we are going to say, that part of the Code derisively styled: In quibus causis colonicensiti dominos accusare possint. ‡ L. 23, Cod cod. tit.

§ See and compare the different acts of the Code, Lib. XI, tit. 57, 58, et sequent, usque ad Librum XII.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TWINS.

"BUT I must abridge this sad history," continued Eva, "by suppressing all the secret machinations and baffled enterprises of the wily struggle for a long time engaged in by Aelius Gaurus and Sotades, and of which I was the deplorable object.

"What could it profit, indeed, to dwell upon these details, that, at present, would have no interest except as a picture of vulgar passions, and the remembrance of which fills me with the deepest shame. Would to God I could accompany it with a repentance, washing away the stains of that miserable life, always present to my soul, despite the lapse of years! I had, moreover, so much were the foolish desires of my heart concentrated upon one point, and absorbed in one thought alone—I had almost lost sight of Rome, and I no more reminded Sotades of his promise to take me there, as soon as he had acquired sufficient wealth.

"This opulence had been attained, and I realized its benefits. The calculations of Sotades had been correct, as are all those founded upon the equally senseless depravity of the poor and the rich. Both helped to fill the hands of Sotades, the former with paltry wrecks, found in the arid roads of life, and under its thorns; the latter, with shreds of purple fallen from their shoulders in festal orgies, and amid the flowery paths of wicked pleasures. Sotades collected all, and if we add to these principal profits, those which he drew as peraequator and collector, from compacts, often fraudulent, made with the proprietors of lands, favoring their encroachments to the detriment of the public domain, and those gained by leniency or rigor, according to circumstances, and the price paid for his management and temporizing in collecting the tribute, it will be easy to form an idea of the fortune to which, by all these means, an unscrupulous, unrestrained public functionary could attain.

"Save the anxiety and agitation, caused by the continually increasing passion of Aelius Gaurus for that unhappy Selene, his sovereign good, and the corresponding desires mani-

fested by that unhappy Selene, Sotades enriched, in prosperity, armed with a certain power, was happy, and talked no more of Rome, where Aelius Gaurus would have followed us, and, probably, have succeeded in obtaining possession of me. But an event suddenly changed the face of things, and this event was the appearance of Chaerestrate in the domain of Aelius Gaurus.

"It was not the first time this man had come to Thrace. Continually seeking young slaves for his shameful establishment, he often traversed the colonies and there supplied himself either by theft, or at a low price with children to be educated as I have already described, whilst Rome indemnified him five-fold for his advances. Ah! I do not know —for it will always be a mystery to me—I do not know what passed between Aelius Gaurus and Chaerestrate, nor the price paid for the powerful aid my old master brought to the assistance of Aelius Gaurus; but in a very short time, I was re-sold by the latter as a native woman; and a sentence of the judge based upon these grounds produced by Chaerestrate, and probably false, declared me truly a slave of the land and a part of the domain to which Sotades had brought me.

"This is not all. That same sentence condemned the unhappy Sotades to all the penalties of the law as a plagiary and harborer of a native woman; making an enumeration of his peculations too numberless and too real, it pronounced the confiscation of all that could be seized of his fortune, consisting only of silver and debts, ordered his expulsion from the domain, and even from the colony. With an armed force, the moderator of the province immediately executed this last part of the judgment, and I believed myself, at last, forever delivered from this ridiculous, abhorred Sotades.

"My taking leave of him was precisely in the same manner as I had once (you remember) greeted his question as to loving him, when, after placing all his gold in the balance, he received me from the hand of Chaerestrate. Whilst the soldiers dragged off Sotades, he, unfortunate one, in despair invoking the gods and men, addressed me, imploring me with soul-stirring groans and ejaculations of tenderness capable of moving a heart of stone; I made no answer

but that of casting to the night winds one of my loud, merciless bursts of laughter, which the echoing shades repeated afar amidst the silence of nature's murmurings.

"Behold me now at the height of my ambition, and triumphant. Aelius Gaurus had taken possession of me, and I reigned in his house. I enjoyed the life Mygdon had promised me, life of successive enchantments, amidst all the prodigalities of luxury, and all the depravity of guilty passions. I had become what might have been expected, after the instructions of my infancy, and the impulses of my own instincts. I enjoyed, and wished to enjoy more; my thirst quenched, I still felt that interior ardor mounting to my lips, and attaching them, quivering with excitement, to new cups. I did not love Aelius Gaurus, and I attracted him; I often hated him, and this hatred I made the supreme means of my domination!

"'Love and hatred!'" said I, 'ah! how right was Mygdon! To feign love, to prove hatred, to tear in caressing, to wound and to heal, to stifle and restore the air, to snatch forth the cry of suffering and appease it by the cry of joy, to extol and abuse, to flatter and to curse, to crush the body, to crush the soul, and afterwards raise them up, to excite hope and fill with despair, by turns an enchanting goddess, or fury with hair of hissing serpents, what intoxication! what delight!' Leading this existence in Thrace, I thought no more of Rome, I was immersed in wealth, desperately I plunged into the depths of pleasure, enjoying a happiness Rome never could have given me. I was surrounded by misery. I had under my eyes the bleeding poverty of the colonists, their nudity, their hunger, the hunger of their women and children, and I thought, with delight, that it was I who aggravated their woes, I who tore off their last remnants of clothing, who snatched the last morsel of bread from all these women, all these children. I did not recollect that a sentence of the judge had declared me one of these women, and pronounced that I had been one of these children. I did not say to myself that, perhaps, to-morrow I might be in the lowest rank of the most miserable. No! I was a courtesan with a heart of brass and face of marble, enjoying the present, regardless of the future. I was the goddess of voluptuousness, with an

aspect colder and sharper than steel. I was that sombre priestess of Plutus, the Money God, depicted by certain painters as seated in a fiery chariot drawn by panthers; and, indeed, there must have gleamed around me sinister lights, for wherever I went through this desolate country, the colonists fled trembling before me, and buried themselves in the dust, as they would have done at sight of those meteors appearing above the horizon, but to presage new calamities. To my misfortune, as I then called the event which cost me my beauty, or rather to my redemption as I have since felt, for God had taken pity on me, I perceived that I concealed already the crown of maternity.

"Love and hatred! lights of my infancy, first palpitations of my heart, heritage of my soul, intimate and sovereign powers, you were still the incessantly conflicting laws of my life and my new emotions! But I did not experience your effects as formerly, nor in the manner taught me by Mygdon. There was a feeling more permanent which, nevertheless, had all these singular and mysterious alternations. Thus I seemed gradually invaded as if by an interior billow mounting from my heart to my soul.

"During entire days or even simple hours, the oppression of love, to speak thus, sweetly seized me, and then I could not describe the peace, the repose, the calm joy with which I was internally inundated. Tears flowed from my eyes, I had thoughts hitherto unknown to me, I believed I could almost hear an interior voice murmuring ineffable things, and which affected me beyond measure. Would any one believe it? In these moments, nothing attracted me so strongly as unhappiness and suffering! I felt invincibly drawn towards all those denied the gifts and joys of life! I wished to dry their tears, succor their decrepitude and sickness, kiss their wounds, give them bread, warm in my bosom their naked, shivering children, and to console, sustain, fortify, cause smiles, and inspire love, love always!

"Charity! holy charity! I knew thee not then, but it was thou, and God had planted thy germ in my heart.

"But also on other days and in other hours, all the tempests of my ferocious nature were suddenly aroused. I saw again the den of Chaerestrate, and bounded as at the moment I rushed upon Stella, intoxicated with anger, palpitating

with all the ardors of jealousy, and the fever of vengeance. I plunged my hands into some heaps of gold that stood before me; my soul opened, and in its abysses I delighted to contemplate nameless things; I listened likewise to interior voices, but they were the railing echoes of the groans of misery, and cries of despair; I was seized with frantic transports, and wished, as formerly, to bite, tear, crush, desolate, cause weeping and suffering, to insult with my cruel laugh, and to hate, hate always!

"Oh, hatred! frightful hatred! it was then I recognized it was the poison of Mygdon still swelling my heart!

"I understood still better these conflicting emotions of good and evil, when I had my children together in my arms; one was a lamb full of gentleness, the other a wolf cub, ferocious and bloody.

"Both were beautiful as the Aurora, but there was a ray of heaven in the look of one, and something like a flame of hell in the eyes of the other.

"During the three years I held them in my arms, or let them play together in the first sports of infancy, I watched them attentively; more than once the wolf would have rushed upon the lamb, and but for me, would have dismembered him.

"I loved them both equally, and I endeavored to confound them in my caresses, but despite their extreme resemblance, it was impossible not to distinguish them apart, for I repeat it, they still, as before their birth, represented the one good, the other evil.

"It was, indeed, myself that I found in my two children, and—"

Here Eva stopped, having noticed that, for some time, scarcely any one had listened.

Aula Plautia Laterana, her daughter Aula, Basilide, and Lactorium, appeared struck with astonishment. They talked among themselves, exchanging words with vivacity.

"Aula," said, for example, Lactorium, "did Eva know Severian?"

"No. My mother did not get Eva until a short time before my father's death, and we never took her with us to Spain, whence, moreover, since that epoch, we have not returned. Eva would not have been able to support the

fatigue of so long a journey, and she has always remained at Rome."

"Has she seen this Furius that thou sayest has so extraordinary a resemblance to Severian?"

"I do not think so. Furius, my brother's slave, lived in a house that, with his gains, he had built in the Field of Mars, and never came here. I, myself, have seen him but twice, once when Aulus returned from Bythinia, and again, very recently, when, at the news of my brother's misfortunes, I wished to inquire of Furius, if he knew where Aulus had taken refuge. Eva has always led in our house an extremely retired life, with which we have never interfered, at first on account of her sorrows, and afterwards out of respect for the Faith she confessed."

Plautia resumed the conversation, and addressing Eva:

"Tell me," said she, "couldst thou recognize thy two children now?"

"And how, my noble mistress, do you suppose I could recognize them? They were but three years old when stolen from me, and that was twenty-seven years ago! Ah! I do not know if God has preserved their life so long! No one can tell me what has become of them!"

"And Sotades? and Chaerestrate? Didst thou see them again?"

"Yes, I saw them again," answered Eva, in a serious tone, and with a renewal of that great agitation she had already shown—"I saw them the night my children were stolen, as I was going to say when you interrupted me."

"Continue," said Plautia, "God alone, who knows all, can enlighten these shades! It would, moreover, be so strange—Continue, Eva, if thou hast the strength."

CHAPTER XIII.

LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

EVA composed herself in a few minutes, making great efforts to calm the violent agitation which had begun to seize upon her again; then she resumed, amidst the general attention, and in these terms, her narrative, suspended by the questions addressed her:

"I have said that the birth of my two children cost me my beauty. And I had indeed, during the time preceding their entrance into this valley of tears, lived in such a state of extreme agitation, that it is not astonishing the flower of my youth should have withered.

"I was immediately unmercifully abandoned by Aelius Gaurus. The feeling of paternity had no power of arresting his cold determination, for we know too well that at Rome, and in the colonies, when a master deigns to cast his fancies upon one of the women enslaved to him, this passing caprice gives him not the heart of a father for the child born of her. It is one slave more added to his drove, one head of cattle,* augmenting the number of these fixtures already upon the land; and never from this soil will the slave be refreshed with one of those beneficent dews which soften the rock and cause to spring up from it, at least, a little verdure. Ah! this will always be the greatest shame of slavery and of the colony, that the offspring of man should be below the little ones of the wild animal, for if the latter soon ceases to recognize its young, they are, at least, allowed an equal liberty of rambling over the plain and desert!

"I was now only a native woman. The sentence declaring this cast me into the midst of that multitude crushed by my contempt, a hundred times the victim of my fury and unruly caprices. I had to take refuge in the miserable cabin assigned me for a dwelling, and I do not know how I would have subsisted without the touching solicitude of some women, poor like myself, but whose kindness began to astonish me. They were those whom I had made suffer most, and I asked myself how they could thus return good

* Salvien, del Gubernat, der Leib V, cap. 9.

for evil, relief for sorrow, consolation for despair, which I had caused them.

"I was sometimes so ashamed of myself and their kind deeds that I dared not speak to them; but I was also, and more frequently, still so filled with my bad passions and all my egotism, that I imagined they served me thus because I had not ceased to reign over them, and because they feared me as formerly.

"The day came when I knew what it meant, and understood what I had never suspected.

"When Aelius Gaurus rejected me, he bordered upon ruin. He had prepared it by his foolish prodigality; I consummated it by my extravagance. For some time yet he was able to keep up, but it was by means of such exactions in his domain, that from all parties arose cries of vengeance and clamors of distress, which at length reached the moderator of the province. The tribute, moreover, was not paid, and such usages, detrimental to the treasury, would not long be tolerated. In reality, the proprietors of the colonial domains were not the possessors. The State or Prince granting these lands, could always withdraw them when the conditions of the grant had ceased to be complied with.

"The expulsion of Aelius Gaurus then was decreed and promptly executed, his estate remaining under sequestration until the investiture of a new concessionary.

"This investiture was long deferred, for it did not take place, my dear mistress, until received by Fulgentius, your noble spouse, a very short time before his death, and that has been not more than ten years, whilst the events of which I speak happened twenty-seven years ago. Who, indeed, would have wanted a devastated estate, situated in the most barren part of Thrace, and whence many of the colonists had taken flight? Who would have coveted it, particularly in the state of desolation in which it had been left by the sequestration, that always discouraged those presenting themselves with a view to its acquisition?

"Ah! this was a frightful epoch of horrible brigandage and inexpressible poverty. I know not how often my children and myself would have died of hunger, had not the poor women, of whom I have spoken, shared with us their

roots and other scanty nourishment that they could pluck from the uncultivated earth. It was at this period I saw reappear Sotades and Chaerestrate, to the increase of the general disorder; and at this period was consummated my last woe—the robbing me of my children.

"It was during a stormy night, when the wind whistled with fury, and the snow, accumulating on all sides, threatened every instant to bury us beneath its funeral pall. I held my two poor children clasped in my arms; I endeavored to calm their fright, and warm them with the feeble breath of my frozen lips. I was alone with them in a miserable cabin, the roof of which was bending beneath the weight of snow. Trembling and woe-begone, I listened with terror to the brutal clamors of the tempest or doleful groans of the wretched shelter which scarcely defended us against the redoubled efforts of the elements. No help could reach us, for the colonial dwellings were a great distance apart, and besides, who would have dared, on this dreadful night, to brave the storm, and deliver themselves to its fury. There was no one then but God with me and my children, amidst these gloomy shades. His anger had spread around, but I did not think of it, and no one had yet told me that the mother who implores Him is never denied His all-powerful aid. Suddenly, despite the whistling of the winds and roaring of the tempest, I heard distinctly a coarse laugh that with terror I recognized, and footsteps on the broken threshold of my miserable cabin. In an instant the door was burst open. Some men rushed in furnished with lanterns, by the reddish light of which I perceived Chaerestrate.

"Sotades was behind him!

"Nevertheless, I stretched myself trembling upon the straw which served me as a bed; with my whole body I protected my two children, and, immovable, I awaited the checked movements of all who were there.

"The silence of death reigning in this house of desolation, and even surpassing the harsh voice of the tempest, was broken by the laugh of Chaerestrate.

"Then I saw Sotades advance towards me, and heard him say to Chaerestrate, showing him the two little ones encircled in my arms:

"'These two little children are thine! Take them!'

"Never did a lioness, bearded in her den by foes endeavoring to carry off her cubs, struggle as I did to defend the only possession which remained, the only joy which had been left me!

"But the men accompanying Sotades and Chaerestrate threw themselves between us, and easily overcame a feeble woman whose exhausted body could scarcely sustain itself. One of the men seized one child, and giving the other to Chaerestrate, both fled with their prey, stifling with their large hands the victims' piercing screams. Then, vanquished and tamed, I fell at the feet of Sotades; in that same voice which had once been his delight, and which was now my only remaining charm, I said to him:

"'Sotades! Sotades! give me back my children!'

"For some time he regarded me with a fearful calmness, and then answered:

"'Hatred to thee! Hatred to them! Vengeance upon thee! Vengeance forever upon them!'

"And he went out.

"I fell back fainting, but still heard these words, which he pronounced with an implacable accent:

"'Forever!'

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"I know not how long a time elapsed before the moment when, heaving a deep sigh, I awoke once more to consciousness. The first thing I noticed, on awaking, was a tress of my hair wrapped around my hands. It was white as you see it now. I then cast a bewildered look upon the surrounding objects, and saw near me several women. I stretched out my hands as if seeking the children, at my side, and finding them no longer there, I began to weep bitterly.

"The women then said:

"'She is saved!'

"Looking at them again, and with astonishment, I recognized them as those whose kindness I had already proved.

"I asked them where my children were.

"'Calm yourself, Selene, calm yourself,' answered they, 'your children are no longer here, but God will restore them to you.'

"'Why have you saved me,' said I, still dwelling upon the words they had pronounced; 'I wish to die!'

"'You must live to find your children.'

"'You are right. I wish to live to find them.'

"And I fell into a slumber again; but it was no longer a horrid nightmare, weighing upon my eyelids and filled with cursed visions; it was a peaceful, soothing sleep, invading my whole being, and penetrating it with a profound calm.

"At the end of a few weeks, I was not only entirely restored, but even nearly able to resume my miserable life, henceforth to be sustained only by the hope of recovering my children. I am mistaken; other thoughts had occupied my mind, other hopes had reanimated my courage.

"During my sickness I had remarked that these women who nursed me, not content with bestowing upon me their time and attention, restored my strength by means of most nourishing food. This was evidently at the price of great sacrifices on their part; it could not be otherwise, for I knew the cost in this desert of the choice meat and the bread of white flour offered me during my convalescence. I saw them, moreover, living upon the usual fare of the colonists, thick cakes kneaded with vetch, and the hard crusts softened by being soaked in water. I often refused the food presented me, showing them what they had for themselves, but they would say:

"'Eat, Selene, eat, and do not worry about us. You are feeble and suffering, we are strong and in good health. Eat then.'

"And these were the women I had most cruelly maltreated in the days of my prosperity and insolence! This made me reflect, and I often asked myself why they thus returned good for evil, compassion for irony.

"One day, when alone with one of them, I resolved to interrogate her, and did so, asking her, though in a sense entirely opposite, nearly the same questions I had formerly addressed to Mygdon. This woman was young; she had been a mother, and but for poverty, hard labor, and the sorrows which had crushed her, the beauty of her countenance would still have been touching. I said to her:

"'Tell me, Ida, dost thou remember once when I passed thy dwelling on horseback, and thou earnest before me, thy

child in thy arms, and asked for clothing to cover his nakedness, and bread to feed you both? Rememberest thou,' continued I, 'that in stopping a cry from his mouth, I threw you backwards in the dust, and bursting out into a laugh, set off at a gallop? Thou rememberest also that thy child died some days after, doubtless from hunger and cold and perhaps also from the blow due to my brutality?'

"'Yes, Selene, yes, I remember it,' said she, the sudden emotion of her whole being and deep accent of her voice proving that the wound was still fresh, and had ulcerated every fibre of her heart.

"'What! Ida, if I have done thee so much evil why hast thou recompensed it with good?'

"'Because I have pardoned you, Selene, and because I love you.'

"'Thou lovest me!' cried I, stupified.

"'Yes, I love you because of your weakness, your sufferings, your sorrows. And besides,' added she, considering me with great attention and giving me a smile, 'I have a law that you were ignorant of, and in which it is written: thou shalt pardon him who offends thee, thou shalt love him who does thee ill, thou ——'.

"'Does not this law permit you to hate, at least in the depths of your heart, those who hate you or those who have abused you?'

"'No. This law wishes the heart to be sincere and the lips true. Its great precept is: Love one another; always return good for evil. You are all brothers, for you have a common Father in Heaven, who will reward you in another life, and even here below, for the good you will have done, and the injuries you will have pardoned. Such is the law I practice, and with me all the poor women you have seen about you, during your long sickness.'

"'Who taught it to thee?'

"'A venerable man, who, from time to time, traverses these countries, and whom, no doubt, we shall soon see, according to his promise of returning at the end of two years.'

"'What is his name?'

"'Agatho!'"

CHAPTER XIV.

EVA'S GUST OF WIND.

"AGATHO!" together exclaimed Basilide and Lactorium, surprised beyond measure at hearing Eva pronounce this name, and interrupting her narrative. "Agatho! he of whom you were just now speaking?" asked they of Plautia and her daughter Aula. "Agatho! the holy solitary who lives in the depths of Spain?"

"Yes, Agatho himself," replied Aula to her two friends, "Agatho, who less advanced in years, used to travel through the most distant, most miserable countries, announcing the law of Christ to those who were ignorant of it, or visiting those whom he had already converted to our Faith. It was Agatho who gave Eva to my mother."

"No, it was your father, Aula, who at my urgent solicitations, consented to let Eva leave the Thracian domain which had very recently been conceded him, and abandoned her to me. Agatho had frequently spoken to me of Eva, and I knew but very imperfectly the singular history, with all the details of which she has just acquainted us. But Agatho had prepared an account of her generous confession of the Faith before the judge Lycus, and this account, of which I took care to have several copies made, had inspired me with an ardent desire of knowing Eva, and having her near me. Eva," continued Plautia, addressing her old servant in the most affectionate tone, "knowest thou what passed in this dwelling, the day I read, for the first time, the account of thy confession of the Faith, which Agatho coming from Thrace brought me?"

"No, my dear mistress, you have never told me."

"Ah! Agatho, who as usual had spent the day in traversing Rome, visiting our brethern, returned at night, bearing in his arms a poor child bleeding and wounded, whom he had picked up almost dead, in the Nomentanian way, at an angle of the house, then inhabited by the late Servilius and where at present, if we are not misinformed, Lactorium, Furius the freedman of my brother installs himself. We had great difficulty in restoring animation to this

unhappy child, but God permitted that he should live, and accompany Agatho to Spain. This child is Severian! Our God is great, Eva, and I have confidence that His strength will display itself in the day He Himself has chosen. But finish thy story. We are now coming to that famous gust of wind which delivered thee from the judge Lycus, and both Basilide and Lactorium, who are not acquainted with this history, await with impatience, the fulfilment of thy promise."

"But," said Eva, "would they not be satisfied with reading Agatho's account?"

"I will read it through, if thou desirest, and because we should know well how thou didst reply to Lycus, but there are some events, not mentioned, which ought to have preceded thy appearance before him, and I myself would like to hear them."

"These events are extremely simple, and can be recalled in a few words," responded Eva.

It was easy to see, that arrived at this moment of her life, a sentiment of truly Christian reserve had taken possession of the old servant and restrained her words. After having humbly traced the picture of her shameful and miserable existence, she wished to be dispensed from showing how she had redeemed its passions and excesses.

"I fell at the feet of Ida" continued she, nevertheless, resisting no longer the urges and requests of those around her, "and kissed them with tears. She lifted me up, and embraced me, assuring me, that I had not caused her child's death, but God who had wished it to live no longer. I returned her embrace, and for the first time in my life felt my whole heart filled with a happiness it had never known, that of loving truly, and of knowing that I was not hated. From this moment I was entirely transformed, I aspired to good as I had formerly coveted evil, and whilst awaiting Agatho who would finish instructing me in so sweet a law, I wished the trial of putting it in practice myself. Very soon the cruel Selene who used to go through this miserable country, scattering around her desolation and terror, was no longer dreaded; on the contrary, her presence brought smiles, and her hands seemed to bear comfort, or at least, hope to all who called upon her.

"I had, alas! so many debts to pay, and so few resources with which to pay them! I was but one of all these poor women, and the most feeble perhaps among them, by reason of my greater poverty and precocious decrepitude, but I gave myself, I gave myself entirely, and I remarked that God seemed to bless me, for the wounds I touched, healed as if by enchantment, and sickness abandoned the couch near which I seated myself to combat it. It was in the midst of these efforts, I was surprised by Agatho who suddenly appeared among us. He knew all my miseries; I concealed nothing of my shameful life, and he told me that God had promised His mercy and pardon particularly to penitents who had once walked in the paths whither my youth had wandered.

"He baptised me, giving me the name of Eva, which I have borne for twenty years.

"Afterwards he left us, for there were many other countries expecting him as we had been, but he promised to return, again and again until age should arrest his steps.

"Agatho had communicated to me a strength which never left me, and which God wished to augment still more. It was not strength of body, for that remained weak and exhausted, but strength of soul and this it is, which has sustained me so long under the ever present sorrows that penetrate my inmost being.

"Some time after Agatho's departure the moderator of the province, falsely charging upon the Christians that ruinous condition of the colony, in reality due the sequestration and extortions of its agents, made a proclamation that all who refused to offer sacrifices to the gods should be visited with those punishments prescribed in the emperor's edicts.

"It was the persecution which had commenced; awaiting it with joy, I prepared myself by redoubling my charity, for I now know the name of this beautiful virtue which Agatho had taught me. It was not long before I was marked out as a Christian, and led before Lycus the judge."

"Here in fact," said Plautia, "is the account of that appearance, extracted from the public registers by Agatho:

"Upon what had been made known to us, that Eva, formerly named Selene, and a courtesan, contemned the gods,

we caused her to appear before us, and having interrogated her, said:

"'Sacrifice to the gods; it is better to live than to succumb in the midst of torments.'

"Eva replied:

"'It was enough for me to sin not knowing God; I will never do what you command.'

"We said to Eva:

"'Behold the image of Jupiter, the king of the gods; approach and sacrifice.'

"Eva replied:

"'Christ is the only image I should know and have before my eyes. Every day I confess to Him my sins and crimes; and because I am unworthy to offer Him a sacrifice, I desire to sacrifice myself for His name, that the body by which I have sinned may be washed in its sufferings.'

"We said to Eva:

"'So thou confessest thou hast been a courtesan; sacrifice, for the God of the Christians rejects thee.'

"Eva replied:

"'My Saviour Jesus Christ has said that He came down from heaven for those who have sinned. His Gospel attests that a courtesan washed His feet with her tears, and thereby received pardon. My Lord did not despise courtesans and publicans; He permitted them to eat with Him.'

"We said to Eva:

"'Sacrifice, that thou mayst again be loved by those who once loved thee, and that they may again give thee much silver.'

"Eva replied:

"'Never more will I receive such execrable silver. Had any remained in my possession I would have crushed it under my feet, or have offered it to my poor brethren, supplicating them with tears to accept it, and pray for my sins!'

"We said to Eva:

"'We repeat it, Jesus Christ repulses thee as unworthy. It is in vain thou namest thy God; He will not own thee; she who was a courtesan cannot be called a Christian.'

"Eva replied:

"'I am not worthy of calling myself a Christian or of being called by that name. It is the mercy of God who

has bestowed upon me this title, not from any merit of mine, but for His own designs.'

"We said to Eva:

"'Who has made thee believe that thy God has given thee this title?'

"Eva replied:

"'I know I am not rejected from before the face of God by this above all, that He has not judged me unworthy of confessing the glory of His name; wherefore I believe He will grant me pardon of my crimes.'

"We said to Eva:

"'What madness! Sacrifice to the gods; they alone can give thee safety.'

"Eva replied:

"'Christ is my salvation; upon the cross He promised paradise to the penitent thief.'

"We said to Eva:

"'Again we command thee to sacrifice to the gods, or thou shalt be ignominiously beaten with rods, in the presence of all who were witnesses to thy disorders, and thou wilt be covered with confusion.'

"Eva answered:

"'I have no other confusion than that of my sins.'"

"After these words," said Plautia, who read the account, "the judge affirms that he made Eva suffer a cruel flagellation, after which he said to her: 'Eva, sacrifice to the gods, for I am irritated at losing so much time with thee. If thou dost not, I will order thee to be burned alive.'

"Eva answered:

"'That is what I desire, if yet I should merit by my confession to be judged worthy of finding repose. I am happy that my body, which has sinned, should suffer divers torments; but I shall never stain my soul by sacrifices to demons!'"*

"And why does the narrative stop here?" asked Plautia of Eva. "What happened afterwards?"

"They had raised an immense statue," said Eva, "which for a long time lay neglected in a corner, and placing it

* These questions and answers are, save a few light variations, necessitated by Eva's particular position, literally translated from the Acts of Saint Afra, courtesan and martyr. (See Dom Ruinart.)

upon a hill, declared it to be the statue of Jupiter, to whom the emperors had commanded all to offer sacrifices.

"Lycus the judge ordered me to be taken towards this statue and stripped of my clothing; then he repeated that I should be condemned to the stake unless I offered incense.

"Just as his ministers were dragging me towards the statue, endeavoring to make me comply with the judge's commands, there arose a terrible gust of wind, blowing so furiously that Jupiter was knocked over.

"Then swarmed out of the statue's sides, from its eyes, from its mouth, a veritable legion of frightened rats, rushing upon all the assistants, but not one of them touching me.

"Lycus the judge was overrun with them; his recorder and ministers were covered——"

Here Eva was interrupted by bursts of laughter from the matrons, seized with the same hilarity as the servants who had already heard this part of their companion's narrative.

"All took flight," continued Eva, laughing heartily, "as if pursued by a troup of those demons to which they had determined I should offer sacrifice—all making vain efforts to rid themselves of these furious animals, of which their clothes were full. I found myself alone in the presence of this great overturned statue of Jupiter, the king of the gods, or rather surrounded by Christian women, whom the rats had respected, and who carried me off to a very secret, distant retreat, where my persecutor could not discover me. I lived there quite a long time, and had the happiness of again seeing Agatho, who came there to visit me, and who, with me, thanked God for the constancy with which I had been endued.

"The persecution having ceased, I reappeared upon the domain, and resumed without molestation the life I had formerly led. Soon Fulgentius obtained the concession of the estate, and he did not delay telling me that I was to set out for Rome—that Rome the object of my youthful aspirations, as the city where my power would be supreme, but where, in reality, I arrived bent down beneath the weight of a double servitude. You have sweetened it, my noble mistress, in treating me as a sister; and you have taught me other virtues that I had not known.

"Such is my life, which I have never until now entirely

recounted to any one, unless to Agatho, and under the seal of silence. I do not know if God, who delivered me from the judge Lycus, should not have abandoned me to him; I had suffered so much that I could have merited then, better than to-day, perhaps, His eternal repose. Blessed, however, be His designs, and may He reserve me yet for new trials whilst He removes from this pious dwelling the great sorrows which have fallen upon it!"

Eva was silent, and for some moments every eye rested upon this strange woman, once an unruly courtesan, now purified by sorrow and martyrdom.

Lactorium in particular had listened to Eva's story with an attention that nothing could distract, and now, at the end of a few minutes, asked her:

"And Sotades and Chaerestrate, what has become of them? Have you never heard of them?"

"Never. Since that fatal night I have never seen them, and, notwithstanding my diligent inquiries, no one has been able to tell me if they are still living."

"What age were they?'

"Whilst I was in his house, Chaerestrate appeared to be an old man; but I saw him, no doubt, with the eyes of my extreme youth, for one day Mygdon told me that he was not more than forty years old. As to Sotades, he was about twenty-five when we set out for Thrace, eight years older than myself. About ten years elapsed from the time I went to live with Aelius Gaurus, and the abduction of my children, which, as I have said, was twenty-seven years ago. I have pardoned Sotades. Unhappy man, I caused him much sorrow! But Chaerestrate, who, after corrupting my youth, sold me, and doubtless did the same with my two poor children—I confess that in regard to him, it is difficult to root out of my heart every vestige of that hatred which, under his guidance, I owe to the instructions of Mygdon!"

The night of tears was past, the uncertain light of the lamps was growing dim before the first glimmerings of dawn.

Basilide and Lactorium, accompanied by their servants, arose to withdraw, and passing by Eva, imprinted upon her forehead a kiss, the mark of respect and honor given to the Confessors of the Faith.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ANCESTORS OF AULA.

MEANWHILE, Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus had taken possession of the dwelling of the last Servilius, situated in the Nomentanian way, from which our young slave took his name, and there flourished in all the satisfaction of his new liberty, and all the splendor of his long prepared opulence.

He had not abandoned his old habitation in the Field of Mars, but had confided it to the management of one of those name lenders whom he had retained, and whose accounts he examined on certain days with a scrupulous solicitude.

His affairs were settled with his two ancient colleagues, Ctesiphon and Carpinatius.

Ctesiphon had not been made "to pull the ear," * as they then vulgarly said, and still do at the present day; he had, with faultless exactitude, poured into the coffers of his ancient little Lupus, the million pieces of gold which, according to their calculation, was due the latter from him, thus proving that the money chest of the fat "mensarius" was well furnished with specie; also, that Furius, as well as ourselves, had not failed to make this reflection.

From Carpinatius it had been much more difficult to recover payment, he, managing the banks or counters of the exterior, had attempted to equivocate with Furius and entangle the result of his numberless operations. It had even been necessary, as Lactorium learned from her uncle, Albinus the pretor, to resort to law, and, although Furius had succeeded, yet to him, this dispute raised by Carpinatius, no doubt for some concealed end, hereafter to be discovered, had been particularly disagreeable.

Furius, resembling in this many other men who rapidly, and by inexplicable ways, arrive at opulence, desired that no one should, too soon, be made acquainted with the extent of his wealth; but the suit with Carpinatius had revealed, as Lactorium has already informed us, the immense amount of treasures he possessed, and, for the moment, this premature revelation might prove gravely prejudicial.

* This vulgar phrase arises from the form of the attestation, which consists in touching the ear of a witness, when a debtor, appealed to by law, refuses to comply.

Besides this, however, and the anxiety awakened by the singular determination of Ctesiphon, relative to the Thracian domain, which the fat banker had persisted in reserving for himself from among the effects of Aulus Plautius Lateranus, and which had indeed been adjudged him, no black cloud dimmed the serenity of the blue sky on which the triumphant gaze of Furius was fixed.

How this azure, so profound, should have cheered him! How it should have made him smile! "I am truly a Servilius," said the former slave to himself, from time to time, with that accent of frank conviction peculiar to those who are the sport of an illusion, or habituated to lying, "for in making myself heir to the will abandoned by that degenerate descendant of a great race, I continue his person and represent him to the eyes of all. Am I not also a Lateran? Are not all their possessions mine? But Aula—"

On pronouncing this name, Furius became pensive. Aula! There remained nothing more, for the realization of his dreams, but to become the happy spouse of Aula, and he had said to Carpinatius and Ctesiphon, that, before a year, Aula would be within the walls of his patrician dwelling. But how to accomplish it? How encounter this proud and imposing maiden? How dare even approach her with such a design?

At the first words, she would have crushed him with disdain; with one look, she would have confounded his audacity, even had she not reproached him with the ruin of her brother, and death of her father!

And yet it must be; yes, Furius must become the spouse of Aula.

During ten years, Aula had seen Furius but twice; yet he, from the depths of his baseness, had not ceased, in secret, to contemplate her.

Aula was sixteen years old when, on his return from Bythinia, he had, for the first time, been admitted into her presence, and that moment had decided his resolutions. It was to her he would remit his treasures, when he had amassed them; it was she who would reign in his house, when a house would be his.

Ten years had elapsed since these audacious ardors had invaded his heart, and during this long period, Aula losing

none of the graces of a young girl, had added to them that dignity of beauty which is the heritage of great patrician races.

Now, more than ever, Furius aspired to Aula, and his desires, aided by his omnipotent opulence, flattered the hope of surmounting every obstacle that separated him from her.

It was also with Aula, that Furius had yet a glimpse of something else besides the vain satisfaction of an impulse which governs even ordinary men—and this something else was a love restrained for ten years, but now, at last, allowed the opportunity of expansion.

Furius had noticed that a secret and mysterious power was gradually gaining ground in Rome; and at this moment, especially, so great was its strength, that the Emperors themselves felt ill at ease in the ancient capital of the world, and understood the necessity of withdrawing from it.

It was not only the Barbarians who, commencing to inundate the frontiers of the Empire from all sides, forced the Emperors continually to its extremities; it was Rome, herself, who repulsed them, no longer wishing their presence.

And, indeed, they were scarcely ever seen there, even in times of peace, and when they must die, it seemed as if they sought some obscure place, to be massacred by the Prætorians (like themselves, dreading Rome), or to disappear, by sickness, from the theatre of the world.

What, then, was this secret power, thus silently gaining possession of the unconscious, but not unwilling, multitude of this city, the Mistress of the Universe, and there tending, more and more, to its own exclusive establishment?

Furius, who had perceived it, like many others, knew nothing precisely; but he had noticed, not without reason, that the matrons of the ancient aristocracy had a great part in this mysterious power, also, that among them, Aula, her noble mother and some other women, their intimate friends, were, at this moment, its most incontestable expression. So, if Furius was not mistaken, Aula would not only be the crowning and end of his work, but the commencement and radiant hope of the most dazzling destiny.

This appears to us the most favorable opportunity for casting a ray of light upon what we have just affirmed, by describing the position then held in Rome by the Lateran

family, that we have believed it our duty to select from among several others, whose sentiments and traditions we think could, nevertheless, have afforded us, just as well, the materials necessary to develop the main idea of our work.

Aula Plautia Laterana, when wishing to place before the eyes of her children all the grandeur of the obligations imposed upon them by their very name, was accustomed to say:

"My children, we are the descendants of saints, 'filii sanctorum sumus.'"

Which was true for the women of that privileged race, but not for the men, who, moreover, were held in small esteem, and with whom, for reasons very soon apparent, we shall but seldom occupy ourselves.

The particular election of women, as vases destined to spread afar the good odor of new virtues, dates back in this grand family of imperial Rome, even to the origin of Christianity, and it was a gentle stranger, or, as Cardinal Wiseman,* in his legitimate Brittanic pride, has styled her, "a noble English lady," who prepared the way.

We wish our subject would permit us to sketch this Claudia Peregrina, radiant morning star, whom two very different voices, that of St. Paul the Apostle,† and Martial,‡ the licentious poet, greeted with almost the same enthusiastic salutation, when she appeared in all the sweet splendors of her Christian faith and conjugal chastity, above the impure horizon of this Rome which rejected all creeds. She was the daughter of one of those British kings conquered by Aulus Plautius during the reign of Claudian, and had probably helped ornament the ovation, which, according to Tacitus,§ was decreed that general on his return from this distant and hitherto almost unknown country. But Aulus Plautius was married to Pomponia Graecina, whom the same historian, in the passage we have just cited, represented as infected with "a strange superstition." We know, that under this pretext, according to an ancient custom, he summoned her before a family tribunal, where, notwithstanding, he was obliged to declare her innocence.

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* Fabiola, chap. X, of the 2d part.
† Ad Timoth. II, cap. IV, verse 21.
‡ Epigr. Lib. IV, 13.
§ Annal XIII, 32, Agricola 14.

How, indeed, could he, in presence of all his own, dare condemn a noble woman, whose good name and great virtues had conciliated the public respect—how, indeed, condemn her by the reprobation of "a superstitution" which alone had clothed her with that dignity of sadness and tears, which her contemporaries, astonished and moved, saw her preserve for forty years?

As a flower, transplanted to a new soil, thence imbibes the juices which will give to its blossom the most brilliant coloring, so Claudia Peregrina, in the bosom of this house where fate had assigned her, learned to imitate the example of a pious resignation to misery; and the grief of Pomponia Graecina added its touching tints to the gracious exile's melancholy. She became a Christian, and the poet Martial, although it may appear somewhat singular, composed the epithalamium of the nuptials she contracted with the younger Pudens, brother of the senator whom St. Peter had converted.*

The Plautia family, thus closely connected with that of Pudens, appears to have been the object of St. Paul's particular solicitude. When condemned to death by Nero, the soldiers who conducted him to execution, on arriving at a gate at the side of the Ostian way, saw a noble matron, whose whole exterior revealed signs of a profound grief, appear before the Apostle, as Veronica formerly met our Lord on the sorrowful road to Calvary. Paul recognized her as one of the holy women who had sat under his instructions, and wishing to give her some consolation and leave her a memorial of his glorious death, he asked for her veil to cover his head, and collect as a precious heritage his blood which was about to flow.

The blood of the Apostle was to be a fruitful seed of illustrious Christians. Plautia, afterwards married † to Sabinus the elder, one of the sons of Flavius Sabinus and eldest brother of Vespasian, gave birth to Flavia Domitilla whom

* Pudens, the senator, was the husband of Sabinella, and father of four children, two girls, Pudentian and Praxeda, and two boys, Novatus and Timothy, whom the Catholic Church numbers among the Saints. (See the Roman martyrologies and that of Adon where, nevertheless, there is no mention of Timothy.) This Novatus is he to whom Seneca dedicated his treatise de Irâ.

† She must have been very young at the period of St. Paul's martyrdom, for in the narration she was called Plautilla.

we have celebrated in another story,* and who caused Christianity to penetrate even into the imperial mansion and among the nearest relatives of Domitian.

Thus (and there is no need of supporting our assertion by other examples which would cause too great a digression) the women of the Plautia family, from the earliest days of Christianity, had an incomparable religious grandeur, and even took a glorious part in the extension of their religion.

Not so with the men. There is frequent mention of them in Tacitus, Suetonius, and other contemporary writers, but we have no reason to suppose that they participated in the Faith of those whom they had united to their destiny and opulence. The splendor of this fortune Nero forever destroyed by confiscating the estates of Aulus Plautius Lateranus, implicated in the conspiracy of Pison, and delivering him to execution, which he bore with all the fortitude of ancient times.†

One souvenir alone, which we have already mentioned as precious and dear to Christianity, was left of the Laterans, and still exists at the present day. It is, indeed, upon the very foundation of their house, seized by Nero, and given by Constantine, after his conversion, to the faithful at Rome, that is built the church of St. John Lateran bearing on its front an inscription to this effect: "That she is the mother and head of all churches in the city and world."

Under Septimus Severus a Lateran was, nevertheless, enriched by this Emperor, but not restored to the grandeur and opulence once enjoyed by the family It is probable ‡ that this restoration, in recompense of considerable services rendered the State and Prince, was refused because of certain crimes he had committed, or with which he was charged.

After Severus, there is no more mention of the Laterans in history, either of eulogy or censure.

But the women of this once illustrious race remained in Rome occupying that singular and considerable, obscured yet important, situation created for these last representatives of the antique Roman patriciate by the circumstances of distress and ruin in which, for a long time, the greatest and most ancient families had been plunged.

* Aurelia.
† Tacitus, Annal. XV, cap. 60.
‡ Aurelius Victor, Epit. de Cæsar, in Severo.

By these necessary and interesting details we shall better understand Aula's position, and also how a Furius, whilst yet her brother's slave, could dare conceive the hope of uniting himself to her, and bringing her, as his wife, into his house, whither she would carry, with the splendor of her name, a part of that mysterious power then exercised by the women of her rank.

CHAPTER XVI.

A MARRIAGE OF THE TIMES.

THE power of the Roman Emperors has been compared to a hammer placed in the hands of one man, by the people, for the purpose of crushing the aristocracy who had so long kept them (the people) in a state of dependence and servitude. Nothing is truer. Never would the Emperors have had that incredible license of bathing, even to satiety, in blood, had they not represented vengeance armed by an inexorable will.

In confirmation of this is the example of Tarquin the Proud, who, taking the envoys of his son into the garden, cut down the tallest flowers, but took no notice of the low and insignificant ones; thus intimating that humble citizens (unless they were Christians, by whom he always believed himself menaced) caused him no uneasiness, and that he attacked, in Rome, only those whose stature towered above the multitude.

But if the men were crushed, the women were forgotten, and these women, who in their turn represented another vengeance, or, rather, another justice, Divine justice, unceasingly endeavored to reanimate the lifeless trunks of their race, and, through their sons, to re-clothe the branches with the luxuriant foliage of their antique vitality. The plebeians were grouped around one man whose instincts and hatred were identical with their own; as these others were also grouped around Him whose Divine strength they felt, and whose mercy and peace they acknowledged—sweet sentiments of their hearts opened to other hopes. Hence by these efforts alone were the Emperors gradually repelled

from Rome, that they might give place to the Father of the new family which was going to extend itself wherever the Roman laws were known.

In truth, the Emperors, for a long time, had not contemned this hidden and indefatigable power of the women. "The Acts of the Martyrs" give testimony of the blood shed by women, for more than two centuries, in this struggle between themselves and those who would one day be among the vanquished. However, the end was not yet. Already the Emperors had withdrawn from Rome, but she was still under their dominion, and the lions that had often devoured the women cast to them in the amphitheatres for food, were still ready, and had been for a long time, awaiting, behind their iron-barred doors, the new victims to be offered. The air was full of groans; the atmosphere was veiled with sinister clouds announcing the tempest. The crowd, impatient and stupid, began to enjoy its own ferocity, and often the consecrated cry, "The Christians to the lions!" resounded amidst ways and places of the city aroused to sudden bursts of fury.

But the women were prepared and not to be overcome. They knew that the last struggle would be terrible, and they had clothed themselves in battle array. In the arena they would, no doubt, be crushed, but not defeated.

They lived in continual expectation of the conflict, and fortified themselves for it by prayer and good works. They reckoned not their numbers, for they had seen, in preceding persecutions, one hundred women rise up to take the place of one who had been hewn down;—and as to the Pontiff whose chair they surrounded, no fears were had for him, they knew that this chair was fixed upon the immovable rock of God's promise. Already more than twenty Pontiffs had died, and nearly all in the bloody agonies of martyrdom; but an Omnipotent hand soon healed the wound of His Church, and again before the anxious Cæsar, furious and humbled in his triumph, was displayed the serene countenance of Peter's successor and Christ's vicegerent—countenance hopeful and glorified in its defeat.

For the present, these first gifts cannot be better indicated, nor their reality more profoundly signalized.

What shades, moreover, near so much light! What fee-

bleness near so much strength! What littleness near so much grandeur!

What we are going to say must not, however, be entirely imputed to the women. Far from that, they were usually the first victims. It was the fault of an age very similar to our own; above all, was it the fault of families, and the constantly increasing power of those deeply rooted prejudices in which they placed their principal hope of speedy restoration and new preponderance. But these families were nearly always mistaken. We might not cite, perhaps, among their descendants, one man truly worthy of the ancient Roman patriciate that they hoped to rebuild with the money of the upstarts to whom these fathers gave their daughters in marriage, the women alone are left of these combinations inspired by the god Plutus, numbers of them are left, and it is one of these glories of the ancient Church, and anterior to the Paulas, the Marcellas, the Laetas, the Probas, the Furias, the Salvinas of St. Jerome, we wish to present our readers in the person of Aula Plautia Laterana.

She possessed all the purity of blood belonging to the patrician matrons of Rome. Never had a doubtful alliance tarnished the brilliant line of her ancestry; she was truly the daughter of the Laterans, who were connected with the most glorious families in the Empire already ancient. But she was poor; the gifts of Severus to her ancestor had only temporarily reëstablished a fortune destroyed by Nero's confiscations, and distress could consummate a decay already begun.

There was then in Rome one of those individuals whose existence is not possible except at epochs marked, it is said, by great progress, and yet, none the less on that account, one of the manifest proofs of a decadence, the symptoms of which appear on every side. Great cities have a singular deference for this sort of people, and never abridge the favors bestowed upon them.

To-day we cover them with embroidery and decorations; then they were ornamented with bands of purple, and this was not considered too great an honor unless the bands exceeded in width those of the ancient "laticlave," that venerated insignia of senatorial dignity in the time of Cicero.

Whence came this individual of whom we speak? No one could have said precisely. He bore a high sounding

name, that of Fulgentius; he called himself a Greek, and had he pretended to be a descendant of the royal race in that country, no one would any more have thought of smiling than they did still later, in the time of St. Jerome, when Rogatus, wishing to espouse Blæsilla, a true granddaughter of the Gracchii and Scipios, declared himself a descendant of Agamemnon!* And how, on their own account, were the Romans necessitated to silently pass over the origin of these folks, or acquiesce in their assumed claims!

There were so many that we cannot enumerate them.

But these suitors, whose riches ill concealed the traces of a very recent slavery, ardently aspired to unions with the daughters of the most illustrious though impoverished families, and by the accommodating vanity of parents, were suddenly transformed into Alexanders and Menelauses.

"We are ashamed to say so and yet must acknowledge," wrote St. Jerome, about a century later, "that nobly born women refuse suitors of their own rank, and unite themselves to men of the lowest condition, even to slaves; they do not fear to attach themselves to these Alexanders and Menelauses. This is seen every day, it is deplored, but no one says anything. The great number guilty of this iniquity makes it an excuse and facility for all."†

"Avaricious negotiators," says he, moreover, "sell the marriages of these noble maidens, and regard more the hands of the purchaser than his deportment! Oh! sorrow! it is the women of our religion, a great number of them, who have given such deplorable examples! But the more frequent these cases have been, the happier must those be reputed who have not followed in their footsteps."‡

Such was, we must say, the history of certain marriages, which we do not wish to mention (because unwilling to cite names at the present day honored and respected on account of the Christian charity and fervor animating those who bore them), although a revelation of them would suffice to indicate the humiliation which the daughters of Rome's most ancient races endured in their unions with these upstarts.

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* Rogatus, per omnes Græcias usque hodie stemmatibus et divitiis ac nobilitate Agamemnonis fertur sanguinem tradere. (St. Jerome, Lib. III, epist. VIII.) This word fertur proves that St. Jerome was not wanting in malice.

† Lib. II, epist. 16, ad Gaudentium.

‡ Lib. II, ep. 18, ad Demetriadem.

The blood of the Juliuses, the Cornelias, the Camillas, the Gracchii, the Probas, the Anitians, which flowed in the veins of only a very few descendants of so many illustrious ancestors, was no longer treated with the respect it formerly received. The adventurers, thanks to their opulence, could easily arrive at the first dignities of the State, and the Emperors, for the most part, arising from the lowest ranks of the multitude, did not dream of decorating with the consulate, the prefecture, the charge of the palace, those who, after all, valued the offices most.

But they were mistaken.

When one of these upstarts, bloated with boasting, puffed up with his own importance, displaying his purple robe, talking of his ancestors and endeavoring to gain position, looked down on each and every one from the height of his borrowed grandeur, it was said of him:

"He is an Olybrius!"*

This word has gained so great a reputation, that even at the distance of sixteen centuries, we repeat it still, and without any loss of the savor it then possessed on the lips of disdainful scoffers.

Moreover, these patricians, sons of Agamemnon, or any fabulous king whatever, were obliged to relinquish in family matters, their authority and privileges, thus giving way to the overpowering nobility of their wives and their children, destined to be the resuscitated branches of the mother's antique race. Formerly, both in republican and imperial Rome, it had been a thing unheard of for the eldest son and daughter not to bear the father's name and that of his ancestry; at this period it was just the contrary. The mother, the mother alone, gave to her children the names of the various races she herself represented; and it was only after

* See Ammianus Marcellinus, in the picture drawn by him of these parvenus, and which begins with these words: Praenominum claritudine conspicui quidam, ut putant, in immensum sese extollunt. Lib. XXVIII, c. 3. We shall not positively affirm that the Olybrius who gave rise to this proverbial expression is the same Olybrius spoken of by St. Jerome (Lib. II, ep. 18) and celebrated by Claudian (Panegyr. in Prob. Olybr.). But the Olybrius of St. Jerome and Claudian is none the less a curious example of what we wish to say here. He was the son of Proba (ex Anitiorum sanguine) married to an upstart, by whom she had three children, Probinus, Olybrius, Probus. Olybrius espoused Juliana, ex Julianorum sanguine, and of this union was born Demetriade, the virgin celebrated in Saint Jerome's letters.

these significant denominations had been exhausted that the father was allowed, but not always, to suspend above the cradle of his youngest children the little coveted splendour or his own ancestral name.

We say not always, for often neither the sons nor the daughters were willing to accept, in defiance of Rome, this memento of an illustration, the object of public derision.

The sons then assumed a fancy name, as Toxotius; the daughters a Greek name, as Demetriade, or neuter, as Eustochium, because these Greek and neuter names were the symbols of positively acquired liberty, and particularly the mark of enfranchisement from paternal authority.*

All these marriages were what at the present day would be called "morganatic unions," only instead of the woman being kept in the shade, as is now ordinarily the case, it was the man who was then held aloof, as far as possible, from the illustrious family circle. They were very willing for him to be clothed with all the exterior dignities which the Cæsar's policy multiplied with the new titles; they loved to see him resplendent with that lustre, which even to an attentive observer removes the stain of an obscure origin, but they scarcely permitted him to penetrate into the sanctuary where lived his own, and whence he usually excluded himself.

*It is very curious to study these various facts in a genealogy where they clearly appear, and which we have chosen from among many others that would have served our purpose quite as well.

Thus, Rogatus, who was said to be a descendant of Agamemnon (Agamemnonis fertur sanguinem tradere) espoused Blaesilla (ex Gracchorum et Cornellorum familia). There was one daughter by this marriage, Paula, whom St. Jerome, slighting the Agamemnon descent, which was not real, calls, on account of her mother, "Gracchorum stirps, soboles Scipionum." She marries Toxotius, and by him becomes the mother of four daughters and one son: 1st Blaesilla, 2nd Paulina, 3d Eustochium, cognomento Julia, 4th Rufina, 5th Toxotius, who espouses Laeta, ex gente Albinorum. By this last marriage is one daughter, named Paula (St. Jerome, Lib. II, epist. 15, et Lib. III, epist. 8). Thus we see Paula's daughters bear the various names of the great families to which their mother is allied, and this is repeated in the second generation, since the daughter of Toxotius and Laeta is called Paula, without regard to the father. As to the first Toxotius, who, in espousing Paula, united, according to St. Jerome's testimony, the blood of Aeneas and of the Julluses to that of the Gracchi and Scipios, he was the offspring of a marriage in which, by his mother, he could indeed be considered as a descendant of this illustrious family. It was in this way. The mother, married to a parvenu, "more gentium," that is, by a union according to the law of races, transmitted to her children her own position, and they legally being reputed fatherless, it resulted that they were simply in familia matris.

Our noblemen formerly increased their wealth by marrying the daughter of some enriched commoner; in those times it was the gold of a freedman espousing him to the descendant of an impoverished Camilla, or a Scipio in distress, which repaired the disasters of a long series of misfortune and restored estates to those who possessed them no longer.

How were these marriages contracted and what was their form before the civil law and the Church? Notwithstanding our multiplied and persevering researches upon this important point, we must confess our inability to show one text entirely satisfactory. We believe, however, the form used was that already mentioned for a long time in the Roman law, and which, under the name of "concubinage," created a true conjugal relation and respected family ties between those whom any obstacle of the law whatever prevented from being married in any other way.

This "concubinage," which we must guard against confounding with another appellation of the law, indicating an immoral, disreputable connection, did not differ in reality from any one of the three modes in force, even from the time of the republic, for the consecration of what was called legitimate nuptials, "justæ nuptiæ." The foreigners had introduced it into Rome, because marriage between them and a citizen was impossible; and the citizens themselves were not long in adopting it, because it was exempt from the fearful consequences accompanying the simple mode, both as regards the marital and paternal power, from which the women and children have in all ages continually tended to rid themselves. This mode of union then perfectly suited those marriages, styled by St. Jerome matrimonia imparia,* on account of the difference in religion, which rendered the the espoused parties as strangers to one another. Usually the wife was a Christian and of an illustrious family, the husband a pagan and of humble origin.

The Church did not condemn these unions; for, at this time, when the ancient creeds were, if not very vivacious, at least very numerous, it would have rendered marriage almost an impossibility. St. Paul† had said, moreover, that the

* Lib. II, epist. 15, ad Laetam.
† I Corinth., cap. VII, vers. 13 et sulv.

unbelieving husband was sanctified by the believing wife, and St. Jerome had also maintained that if surrounded by Christian parents Jupiter himself would have believed in Christ! * But did the Church bless these marriages? We can think so, and yet we have no grounds for this opinion. If she did, how could the benediction of the priest, upon the Christian wife, also impregnate with its gifts the pagan husband.†

It was a marriage of this kind that, at the instigation of a father ruined for years and aspiring to restore a remnant of the ancient grandeur of his name, Aula Plautia Laterana had contracted with Fulgentius, whose fortune was enormous, and whose reputation was celebrated.

But Furius was mistaken when he affirmed to Ctesiphon that the mother of Aulus, then his master, had been united to Fulgentius before a Christian priest—a revelation which, we recollect, considerably ruffled the fat banker's uncommonly peaceful disposition We shall know, hereafter, why Ctesiphon, who for a long time had watched the house of the Laterans with more vigilance than he wished known, had manifested so much displeasur , and even fury, on learning that Aulus Plautius Lateranus was the son of Fulgentius, and that all this family, into which Eva had been received, were Christians.

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* Lib. II, epist. 15, ad Laetam, filiam Albini pontificis.

† One passage of Tertullian would lead us to suppose that the Church had nothing at all to do with these unions between Christians and pagans. He seems to affirm that the Church even forbade them. Indeed, after having placed before us the picture of a marriage: Quod ecclesia conciliat et confirmat obligatio et obsignat benedictio, angeli renuntiant pater rato habet, he adds: Non licet aliter fidelibus nubere et si liceret non expediret (Ad Uxor. Lib. II, cap. 9). We nevertheless maintain that the Church must have authorized these marriages, for there are too many examples to leave us in any doubt on this point.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SKILLFUL ONES OF THE PAST.

FULGENTIUS was a descendant of no Grecian King whatever, as more than once he had allowed the fawning flatterers of his fortune to affirm, nor was he a freedman as Furius had erroneously asserted at the Supper of the Three Graces, and in presence of the two guests attentive to his least words. The truth is, that the mother of Fulgentius had been a slave, but being emancipated a short time before his birth, he owed to this happy circumstance the legal advantage of being born free, and even ingenuous.

We shall not seek to discover how Fulgentius had employed his youth, nor how, despite an humble origin, he had been able to reach the first steps of his immense fortune. We shall introduce him simply at the period when he became, thanks to this opulence, the spouse of a true patrician; and when he could, henceforth, hope calmly to enjoy beside her the grand position he had known how to acquire.

But there are men who never know when to stop, and there are hearts incessantly open to, we could not say what aspirations, awakened in them by phantoms dimly seen along the horizon.

What was this ambition which governed the thoughts of Fulgentius? What was this dream, flattering those most doubtful hopes whose secret sentiments were always awake in the depths of his soul? Was it the increasing desire of wealth continually urging him to new enterprises? Was it the thirst for power and honor parching his lips with an inextinguishable fire? Perhaps the ambition of both wealth and honor had taken possession of him, for it would be difficult to tell where this personage was not, whose indefatigable activity, displayed on all sides, reached even to the extremities of the most distant Roman provinces.

He was in Bythinia, he was in Gaul, he was at Rome, he was in Spain, he was everywhere—rather in the place where we would not have dreamed of finding him, than in that where he had but lately been seen, multiplying himself as

it were, and like a spot appearing suddenly when least expected. No one knew better than he, every station of those magnificent Roman ways, which from the miliary column situated in the centre of the Forum, and called the golden mile, on account of the ball of gilt bronze surmounting it, extended even to the utmost limits of the Roman world, that is, to those countries where lived, more menacing than ever, the untamed Barbarians.

These long ways were not easily traversed, especially with the customary rapidity of Fulgentius, except by certain privileged persons furnished with imperial patents allowing them the use of the "veredi," or relay horses, established at various distances; but when he arrived at one station, the chief immediately gave orders to prepare the best coursers, even without the precaution of asking to see the brevet, so sure was he that Fulgentius (whom he recognized immediately, having frequently seen him pass), was provided with one for every route.

If now, some one asks us to tell exactly who this very active personage was, and his precise official position, we would answer, that he was nothing, and yet, at the same time, everything.

He was nothing, because he had no particular title of honor, nor any precise function, also because, in reality, he acted solely for himself and the advancement of his own fortune.

He was everything, in this sense, that he enjoyed the most enormous credit, and, at certain times, was considered indispensable. These times, now more and more frequent, were those when the Roman legions, finding themselves exposed to clouds of Barbarians, incessantly hovering over the frontier of the Empire, endeavored to live in the bosom of countries designedly ravaged by artful enemies. Fulgentius, by the aid of a thousand means at his command, by reason of his perfect knowledge of every place, and the relation he bore even to these people armed against Rome, provided food for all, and procured, if not an abundance, at least, the necessities of life where others would have perceived, amidst the sterility of the desert, and the horror of devastations, nothing but an absolute lack of resources.

This man was then, in war times, what we call a commis-

sary or purveyor-general; in times of peace, a grantee of domains or colonial lands, bestowed upon him in recompense of his services.

That is to say, he established his fortune upon great public miseries; realizing in the camps those enormous profits which have always accompanied the furnishers of food; and in the colonies, depending upon the same calculations we have seen Sotades make, as to the gold that artful hands could reap from the covetous desires of the poor; also upon the greater profits accruing to him as "dominus fundi," from the wide difference between the tribute paid the Prince, and the revenue to be derived from labor imposed upon the colonists.

Such is the personage who offered himself to the Laterans at the moment of their greatest distress, and who was to vanquish the proud Plautia, only child of an illustrious race, which, without her, would have been extinct. None of the stipulations, customary in similar cases, were wanting in this union, destined to restore an impoverished race, and to prepare the future grandeur of an upstart's offspring.

There was no marriage contract, for there could be no dowry without the "justæ nuptiæ," but the same results were reached by means of the authorized agreements between foreigners, to whom the contracting parties were entirely assimilated.

The gold of Fulgentius bought in the suburbs of Rome an estate, which, with the house in the Salarian way, would form the inalienable patrimony of the young girl he was going to espouse. This estate and this house in their quality of "Italic lands" were still, at the epoch we consider,* alone susceptible of the privileges of the ancient "ager Romanus," all established in favor of the patriciate; and, consequently, well accorded with the aims of a family secretly aspiring to that legal assignment of the past. The daughter born of the union he was about to form (and why should he not indulge this hope?) would with herself bestow these endowments upon some representative of

*This was not until the time of Justinian, who positively destroyed, by his celebrated constitution de Usucapione transformanda, the difference between lands called Italic, and those styled Provincial.

another equally decayed race, and the splendor of the "stemmates" or genealogical line could, by this means, recover all its ancient lustre.

As to the son (should he be equally fortunate in having one) bearing the Lateran name, he would need nothing but the power arising from great wealth. And the numerous Provincial estates conceded to Fulgentius, and their great revenues which he well knew how to manage, left him no anxiety on that point. This son, his supreme hope, would employ these revenues as the father Fulgentius had done. He would redeem grand Italic domains, "latifundia," so as to counterfeit the dowry without which a woman could not be "uxor," that is, could not transmit to her children the plentitude of rights belonging to the patriciate; he would offer one portion to some daughter of Rome's antique aristocracy, menaced, by the calamitous times, with the fear of descending from her rank, and would reserve the remainder for himself and the name (that his father lacked) to which he would thus forever restore the brilliancy of a past, already afar off, and partly effaced.

The first and most essential condition of these combinations, admitting a parvenu to the honor of allying himself with an ancient family, was, that he should be willing to remain in the background, and live, as it were, a stranger to his wife and children.

Wherefore, the eldest son and daughter, as we have already mentioned, bore the name of the race they hoped to revive; and the other children, after exhausting the various denominations of the races with which they were nearly or distantly connected, took Greek or neuter names, significant symbols of their emancipation from all paternal authority, and of their personal independence.

Fulgentius, following the example of many in his situation, submitted, though unwillingly, to this condition, because his refusal would have prevented the vain realization of a marriage that flattered his pride, and to which his ambition aspired for other secret designs.

Nevertheless, because neither the women nor their relations could, according to law, be guardians of their juvenile heirs, he would be granted the guardianship of the first son, and, thereby secure to himself the right of directing that

son's steps in the paths deemed by the father most advantageous to the fortunes of both.

Behold how the grand families of ancient Rome were reduced, and in what miserable calculations they exhausted the last remnants of vanishing influence which, by the above mentioned means, they endeavored to recover!

Is it not time to cry out with the poet?

"O vanas hominum mentes et pectora caeca!"
Vain schemes of men which their desires mislead!

At every epoch in the life of nations, there is, indeed, a vivifying and regenerating breath sweeping over all, and by which, nevertheless, the great ones of the day, are not willing to be overcome, although, like others, they may feel its irresistible influence.

This breath, at the period we contemplate, was that of Christianity, which already had been long victorious in the Roman world, and was now, after one more bloody struggle, about to triumph definitely and in defiance of nations.

There was true strength! There was true life! The men of these antique families, for the most part, did not understand it; but the women, sacrificed to these men's impotent calculations and ridiculous schemes, happily divining it, allowed themselves to be carried away on the glowing wings of this new breath.

The Provincial lands where the men endeavored, like Antaeus of old, to recover lost strength in touching the earth, served but to corrupt them more and more, by their abuse of the gold and immense revenues which their cupidity drained from these estates.

Aulus Plautius Lateranus (offspring of a marriage consented to with a parvenu, only because a patrician race thereby looked forward to its own restoration) stripped at thirty, by an audacious slave, of all the property that seemed to promise and assure this restoration, is but one of the numberless examples which could be given of an opulence prepared by family stipulations, and serving in the end but to the ruin and degradation of the children.

It appears, on the contrary, that Providence has always regarded, with a favorable and complacent eye, this "ager Romanus," that Numa, from the very birth of Rome, had

consecrated with a religious thought, and which he had made the base of the public law and all civil institutions. It seems to have been reserved, even to our day, as a possession, in some measure inalienable and imprescriptible, for He has made it the patrimony of His Church, whose seat is that very city containing the field consecrated as the foundation of those three grand institutions, Religion, Family, Inheritance, which Christianity knew how to establish and respect much better than any other legislator.

Upstarts, like Fulgentius, willingly abandoned to the women the "ager Romanus," because having been, for a long time, no more than a sterile soil, it could scarcely hereafter serve any other purpose than the assignment of those vain privileges, not, indeed, disdained by our upstarts, but impossible for them to obtain except through the women, last representatives of the once grand races; and then, by reason of that mysterious connection always existing between land and its possessor, from this unfruitful soil, neglected because of its unproductiveness, there gradually arose, like a warm vapor, the religious fervor of ancient times, which, penetrating and enlarging the hearts of these women, placed them in the first rank of God's new predilections. The women became strong, whilst the men were weak, they were learned, whilst the men were silly, they had a presentiment of the future, whilst the men regarded only the past, they foresaw and founded the new Rome, whilst the men knew no better than to despise and desert her.

This was the case with Fulgentius as soon as he had contracted with Aula Plautia Laterana the union to which his vain ambition had made him aspire. Rome was no longer the city of great favors, for the Emperors seldom appeared there; nor of grand enterprises, for they contented themselves with living in the remembrances of the past; he hastened then to set out again for the Provinces where he would find that life and motion which the presence of the imperial court diffused around it, and where his activity could resume its former lucrative occupations, whilst, at the same time, his reputation prepared new ones.

Aula Plautia Laterana, delivered to this man, unmurmuringly submitted to his neglect. She did not, like the women

mentioned by St. Augustine, show on her countenance traces of ill-usage, or conceal them like the pious Monica, but she was obliged to resign herself to a life of isolation, and live unprotected in the solitude of her dwelling. Then, following the example of the Christian matrons of her day, she sought that help which never fails, and found it in the ministers of her religion, those new men, already abounding in Rome, and whose chief represented a power gradually establishing itself in this city abandoned by the Cæsars, and tending more and more to its own aggrandizement.

All the authors of that period have mentioned the close relation between these Roman matrons and him who was already called the "antistes," or priest of Rome; some, as Ammianus Marcellinus for the sake of ridicule and satire; others, as Tertullian, Lactanus, St. Cyprian, St. Jerome, and St. Augustine, to restore the true character of the Pontiff, and offer a proof of what marvels had been operated in these women's hearts.

But all agree in attesting this power, and showing that it had attained, in the bosom of the city, such a degree as completely overshadowed the Emperors and their authority.

"I hate," said Diocletian, "as a usurpation of my power, the influence of these Christian priests over the matrons. I would prefer to dispute my Empire with a rival, rather than to hear of the election of one of these priests in Rome."*

"I am not astonished," still later wrote Ammianus Marcellinus, on the election of the Bishop of Damascus, "that those who aspire to the Christian Pontificate make the greatest efforts to succeed. When they have obtained it, they are established in a fixed situation of fortune and honor, and the matron's offerings procure them inexhaustible funds. When they appear in public, it is in magnificent chariots; they are superbly dressed; the delicacy and profusion of their tables would rival that of kings."† St. Jerome himself is not afraid of citing a response that a consul, named

*St. Cyprian, epist. III, ad. Anton., page 69, Maur, Edit.

† Ammianus Marcellinus, Libr. XXVII, cap. 3. See Sulpitius Severius, Dialogue, II, cap. 13 de Virt. B. Mart., in which he speaks of these virgins: Quæ crebris occursibus ubique se præbent obvias sacerdoti, quæ convivia sumptuosa disponunt, quæ una pariter accumbunt.

Vettius Practextatus, made one day to the Bishop of Damascus, when urged by the latter to become a Christian. "Cede me your place," said he, "and immediately I will conform to your desires." * So true it was, that the power of the Roman priest, already invested with a certain magnificence, and sustained by the pious zeal of the most illustrious matrons, had gradually substituted itself for that of the magistrates, and tended even to efface the imperial omnipotence!

CHAPTER XVIII.

A CHRISTIAN MOTHER AND PAGAN FATHER.

WE wish that our subject would, without too great a digression from the main idea of the work, permit us to sketch the life of a Christian wife at this epoch, and in the neglected situation of Aula Plautia Laterana.

This would be difficult to do at the present day. The times, thank Heaven, are very different, and the wives of our day, although there may be some, who, like those of centuries past, could complain of living in isolation and neglect, are, nevertheless, far from being situated as those of whom we speak, neither surrounded by the same difficulties, nor defied by such terrible prejudices.

Thus to class these differences under two heads alone; our women do not live in the bosom of a society by which, in some measure, they are despised, or noticed only that their rights may be denied or contemned, and, more than all, they have not to undergo the anguish of the persecutions, when one is overdreading the approach of another still more terrible in its fury, and preparing themselves for it with all they hold dear.

And, nevertheless, what must strike us with astonishment at this epoch is, that these women, whether in the interior of their houses, captives to private sorrows, or seen without, a prey to the anxieties or terrors of the future, possess everywhere, and preserve under every circumstance, a calmness

* Epist. 38, ad Pammachium.

of heart and serenity of mind, very few examples of which could be met with in our times, and even in times less tormenting than ours.

As Tertullian remarks, this resulted first from the fact that, after these women had learned to know the living God, they improved themselves and their condition, what heretofore they had not been taught to do.* Consequently, from this time they felt always upheld and directed. No sage of antiquity ever thought of assisting and directing the woman, whilst the humblest Christian priest immediately conceived it a duty, which he delayed not to put in practice.

But no one could say what this strength was which for ages supported the woman's tottering weakness, nor that strong bias of her heart which she proved only in being forced to restrain it.

It is necessary to read the Fathers of the Church, particularly the letters of St. Cyprian and St. Jerome, to understand what the women of these times must have felt when all the powers of their souls were awakened by these proud spirits, and all the harmonies of their nature put in union with the sympathetic accents of these writers. God, moreover, permitted former voices to keep silence, that these new voices might be better heard.

There was no longer a Virgil to speak the language of poetry; nor a Cicero that of eloquence and philosophy, nor Titus Livius to recount historic deeds.

The only poetry was that of Philenis,† which had brought a blush to the face of Elephantis, who, himself, had caused Martial,‡ a shameless poet, to blush,—or of that Sotades who had surpassed the disgraceful lucubrations of Sabellus and Dydimus.§

As to eloquence, philosophy, and history, we must not even mention their few interpreters; every one knows that great writers had long since disappeared, and at the period we consider, no author of any renown had attempted to fol-

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* Tertullian, de cultu feminarum. (Lib. 1st. cap. 1.)

† A courtesan of whom St. Justin speaks in his Apology. Her poetry was quite worthy of her calling.

‡ Mart., XII, 43.

§ Sotades, Sabellus, and Dydimus were extremely licentious poets, particularly the first. Fortunately, none of their writings are extant. Nothing is known of them, except from Martial (loc. cit.) and the Apology of St. Justin.

low that path once clear and luminous, but now, as it were, filled with briars, obscuring the way before him.

But an unknown language, not less brilliant, and much more consoling than that of ancient Rome's rarest geniuses, suddenly arose in the midst of the new Rome; it spoke of faith in the Apologies of Quadratus, of Aristides, of Athenagorus, of St. Justin, of Tertullian and Arnobius, in the Dialogue of Minutius Felix and in the writings of Lactantius; of piety and mercy in the Letters of St. Ignatius, in the Treatises of St. Clement and St. Cyprian,* of suffering in the Acts of the Martyrs, which had been carefully collected and everywhere disseminated. But never would men have believed, loved, and suffered as women; consequently, it was especially to the latter this language was addressed, and it was they who best understood its words.

Such were the pious enchantments that charmed the solitude of Aula Plautia Laterana, such the melodies, though yet scarcely known, whose sweet murmurs appeased the young wife's sorrowful fate.

The assiduous reading of the Scriptures, the Gospel, and Epistles of the Apostles, conversations with the holy ministers of her religion, her pleasant intercourse with a few matrons whose troubles and trials were similar to her own, the daily exercise of charitable works, prayer and the study of those new books whose rare copies she obtained at intervals often very distant, filled every moment of her life; whilst Fulgentius continued his rapid journeys from one extremity of the Empire to the other, and multiplied his lucrative operations, appearing at Rome only at certain times, and leaving with the same precipitation that had had accompanied his return.

Meanwhile, a son was born to Plautia, and four years after a daughter crowned all the hopes of the family; the Laterans were rejoiced, for they had obtained the object of all their vows and prayers; Plautia, alone, despite the new emotions of her heart, felt anxious and troubled. What would become of this daughter, who had no other stay than her mother's tenderness? And this son, especially, what would become of him, when one day he should be taken in

*St. Cyprian, particularly. He composed two Treatises, one upon Mercy, the other upon Alms Deeds.

charge by an idolatrous father, whose only faith was a blind belief in his fortune and ambitious desires? Profound anguish, which cannot be felt by the mothers of our day, not even by those united to husbands of another communion, for in these marriages there are, at least, a common conviction and common hopes, the belief in a Redeeming God, and the hope of eternal salvation, which were ridiculed by paganism, mocked at by Fulgentius, who invoked Jupiter, and swore only by Pluto and Erebus. And besides this, was the pagan law which saw in the wife but a being indispensable to the propagation of families, and which had dared to say of the mother, that she began and ended in her own person.*

Behold the causes of Plautia's trouble, and why, in extending her view but slightly beyond the present, she had perceived only reason for sorrow, where her father, still living, foresaw but the assured regeneration of his own fortune, and that of his impoverished race, represented in the daughter's offspring.

Yet courage never failed the heart of this mother agitated by such cruel presentiments; she put her confidence in the God who holds our lot in His hands; she invoked His name before her children, she imbued their tender minds with her own beautiful Faith, she taught them to contemn the things of earth and look above; she placed before them the pious souvenir and grand examples of the women of her family; she wished to make her daughter what she herself was, and the son, especially, did she prepare with a view to that future which, for him, was soon to commence; she endeavored to communicate to him the strength he would need, and, after all this, should he one day succumb, she would have a right to make the sorrowful reproach we have already heard from her lips:

"My son, what have you done with the Faith you received from your mother?"

Aulus had attained his fourteenth year, protected, with his sister, under the maternal wing, caressed by its movements, feeling no other wind than that of its agitations, scarcely knowing his father, ignorant of himself.

*According to the celebrated adage of Ulpien, transformed into a law. Mulier familiæ suæ et caput, et finis est.

At this age, the ancient Romans, in a family festival, taking from their sons the "pretexta," robe of childhood, solemnly presented them the toga, symbol of manhood, and the youth, himself, suspended from the neck of the Lares, the golden bull which, from the first moment of his existence, he had worn as a preservative against the sorceries that could be cast upon him by those who were envious of his fortune.

At this epoch in the life of his son, Fulgentius suddenly reappeared in Rome. It was not to celebrate this family festival, called the feast of the "Liberales," an old, worn out souvenir of antique times, nor to offer Aulus the manly "toga," a vestment formerly revered by the free citizen, now so out of vogue that even a slave in this costume, at present grotesque, had not dared to brave the sarcasms of passers-by,—but simply to demand, in presence of the Laterans, those rights (with which he had taken care, since his marriage, to acquaint himself) concerning his son, and to inform Plautia that the hour had come for him to take charge of this child, whose fortune would henceforth be in his father's hands, and whose presence would, moreover, be necessary to that father's own designs.

Already, on another occasion, which our readers have not forgotten, have we drawn the picture of a mother who, during the horrors of darkness, was robbed by cruel men of her children, the only consolation of her poverty and woe. We, at least, believe it will be no repetition to show them Plautia, forced to appear before this family tribunal, and let them hear the likewise despairing, though more connected, accents of her maternal tenderness.

It plead, not to defend her own Faith before the family as it did for Pomponia Graecina, one of her ancestors—but to defend the menaced faith of her son—nor, as still more lately, for Selene, protecting her children against avaricious robbers, who carried them off to sell as slaves—but to resist, in the presence of consenting relations, a pagan father, armed with almost legal rights, who abandoned to her the daughter, and reclaimed the son to associate him with his father's reputation and fortune.

When Fulgentius had made known his demand and stated the case, Plautia said to him:

"And, now, where are you to take Aulus?"

"To Bythinia, whence I come, and whither I return. You are not ignorant that since Caius Valerius Diocletianus (whom the gods protect!) has become Emperor, that in this province alone, and at Nicomedia, the new capital, are concentrated the fairest hopes of a young man's future."

"What need has Aulus of such hopes? The considerable estates and great riches you already possess, do they not assure him of more than what many others would desire?"

"Aulus has a grand name which he receives from you, and do you know why I have consented for him to bear it? Diocletian understands that henceforth the Empire is to be divided; already has he shared the government with Maximian Hercules,* abandoning to him Italy, but Maximian does not reside at Rome, but has withdrawn to Milan, as if escaping from that formidable influence which repulses the Emperors from the ancient capital of the world. But there is question, at this time, of creating two Cæsars.† Do you not perceive how Aulus, with his name and the souvenirs of that race, which commands the esteem and veneration of all Rome, would have the greatest chance of drawing upon me or himself a glorious choice?"

"Indeed!" exclaimed several Laterans, astonished at so splendid a perspective. "And this election," demanded they, eagerly, "is it to take place soon?"

"I do not know. At Nicomedia, we have been very busy for some time. Diocletian destroys the city and rebuilds it to rival Rome. Monuments arise on all sides and force the citizens, with their families, to emigrate as if the city had been taken by an enemy. The Provinces sink under the expense, but there is nothing more agreeable to those who, like myself, are occupied in their reconstruction, for what is built this evening may be demolished to-morrow, and it is sufficient for the Emperor to say, 'That is not right; it must be so,' when, immediately, a hall, a circus, a mint, an arsenal, is pulled down, and on the ruined site a palace

* Diocletian, elevated to the Empire in the year 284, A. D., did not associate to himself as colleague, Maximian, surnamed Hercules, until the following year, 285, A. D.

† Constance Chlorus was not created Cæsar nor Galerius until A. D. 292.

is built for the Empress and her daughter.* The laborers, now above the pretorians themselves, are those who will nominate the Cæsars, and I have a grand number in my interest—These are my hopes!"

Whilst Fulgentius complacently expatiated upon his designs, the ambitious bearing of which was now apparent, Aula Plautia Laterana, scarcely comprehending him, remained thoughtful and silent. That word "hopes," terminating the answer of Fulgentius to the questions her relations had addressed him, opened her sad lips, and she exclaimed:

"Your hopes! Mine, for Aulus, were very different, and, I believe, wiser than these, if not guilty, at least, uncertain and perilous intrigues, to which you would expose his youth!"

"Could they be made known and appreciated?"

"Fulgentius, I have educated my son, ever since his birth, in a religion you despise, and in customs foreign to you. Do not deprive me of Aulus, do not make him lose his Faith; leave him near me, that we may continue to live together as we have done—"

"Always the same folly," cried Fulgentius, interrupting the Christian mother, whose real anguish was now becoming visible to her husband and relatives.

"The same folly!" repeated she, her patrician pride unable to conceal its astonishment at this expression from Fulgentius, who had habitually treated her with deference.

"Yes, a folly!" said he, fearing not to repeat the remark. "I am sorry that the word wounds you, but it is the softest term used by those who wish to designate, what you call, your religion. You have seen, for example, how Lucian, a spiritual author whose writings you have read, treats

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*We must cite authority, otherwise, it would be believed that we had drawn upon our imagination: "Huc accedebat infinita quædam cupiditas ædificandi; non minor provinciarum exactio in exhibend s operariis, et artificibus, et plaustris, omnibusque quæcumque sint fabricandis operibus necessaria. Hic basilicæ, hic circus, his moneta, hic armorum fabrica; hic uxori domus, hic filiæ—Repente magna pars civitatis exciditur. Migrabant omnes cum conjugibus ac liberis, quasi ut ab hostibus capti. Et quum perfecta hæc fuerant cum interitu provinciarum. 'Non recte facta sunt,' aiebat, 'alio modo fiant.' Rursus dirui ac mutari necesse erat, iterum fortasse casura. Ita semper dementabat, Nicomediam studens urbi Romæ co-æquare." (Lactantius, de Mortibus persecutorum. cap. VII.)

this ridiculous worship. 'Fie! fie! fie! to these fooleries. Ridicule and contempt to these bad teachings! To the devil these silly hopes!'"*

"Oh! Fulgentius!" cried Plautia, whilst two big tears fell from her eyes, and rolled slowly down her burning cheeks.

"Do you wish, then," said she, at the end of a few minutes, during which all around had kept silence, "do you wish me to humble myself before you, and, throwing myself at your feet, implore you to leave me my son? I will do it, nevertheless, if it must be—"

"No," coldly answered Fulgentius, "neither I nor your own family, who are here, would suffer it; moreover, it would be useless, for it is time that Aulus should follow his father. For the rest, dismiss your fears," added he, with the same accent of unalterable determination. "I can watch over my son and more effectually than you yourself could here. If I am to credit the assertions of certain well-informed men, the period is not far off when it will be dangerous in Rome to be found among the number of the Christians. On the first opportunity it is desired to put an end forever to this troublesome sect. The struggle will be decisive, I assure you."

Disheartened by this cold, harsh language, the desolate mother contented herself with heaving a profound sigh, and lifting to Heaven her eyes all filled with tears. What could she do against a father? What could she do against her family? All, indeed, inclined towards Fulgentius, all united with him and wished Aulus to enter upon that career in which he would be sustained by so strong a prop.

Thus, often decide those family assemblies where the lot of children depends upon ambitious, frivolous relatives. Thus are consummated those legal robberies, not so violent as such deeds of Sotades and Chaerestrate, but which penetrate, with the same despair, a maternal heart enlightened by the anxieties of its tenderness.

In leaving this family tribunal, Fulgentius passed through the Forum and there perceived upon the platform of the public market that sprightly-looking little slave, bearing

* Phy! phy! phy! phy! nugas illas! Heu! heu! heu! heu! consultationes malas! Væ! væ! væ! væ! spei inani! (Lucian cited by Baronius, Annal. Eccles. Tome I, page 635.

the name Lupus, given him by the "argentarius," whose estate, at this moment, the heirs were engaged in settling.

Lupus appearing to Fulgentius a suitable purchase for his son, he became the highest bidder, and some days after, all three left Rome on their way to Bythinia.

As for Aula Plautia Laterana, not wishing to remain any longer in a dwelling which every instant reminded her of the sorrowful separation that had just overwhelmed her, and, remembering Agatho, the pious solitary who, more than once on returning from his long journeys, had visited her, she departed for Spain where Fulgentius possessed an estate, the enjoyment of which he conceded his wife.

Aula, then about twelve years old, accompanied her mother, and quit Rome for the first time in her life.

CHAPTER XIX.

A SOLITARY.

TO the north of that Cordova which, two centuries before, had sent to Rome Seneca to teach an easy philosophy, Lucan to recall some accents of her grandest poets, Martial to celebrate, in licentious verse, his cursed impurities—but a few miles from the river Betis, which then flowed peacefully before Cordova's walls, as it does to-day, though under a different name,* there extended, stretching out indefinitely towards the east and west, like an impassable line of high walls, the sombre, towering peaks of an immense mountain chain. Ancient Greek and Latin geographies have not transmitted to us the primitive denomination, but they were no other mountains than those now called Sierra Morena, formerly marking the limits of Betica with Lusitania and Taraconensis, as, at present, they form the boundary of Andalusia from Estramadura and New Castile. This beautiful country, always celebrated for the fertility of its soil and ever radiant purity of its sky, merited then, much more than in our day, the enthusiastic eulogiums we delight to bestow upon it. Thick forests covered with their verdant

*The Guadalquiver.

mantles the now almost denuded mountain peaks, and, from their neighbors of Italica (a Roman colony founded by Trajan), the inhabitants of the plains had learned to enrich them with the choicest productions, which rewarded the careful culture of those opulent estates in Campania or antique Etruria.

Numerous streams, their banks perfumed by mastic, hermes, clove, orange and citron trees, whose flowers, like so many natural crowns, embellished their sinuous course, descended precipitately from surrounding hills, and their waters, rolling over their pebbly beds, made that sweet murmuring which accords so well with the harmony of passing breezes, in the silent night or sultry day, swaying the long needles of the great pines, or the softly moaning summits of the tall palms.

In the most deserted part of this magnificent, though thinly settled, country, upon the first steps of an abrupt barrier of rocks, whose gloomy masses were piled on one another as if the Titans had again revolted against Heaven, —in sight of the city which, seen from afar, looked as if asleep behind the caressing waves of its Betis—was a spacious cave sheltered from all dampness, its floor covered only with fine sand, or, here and there, the dried branches of the neighboring trees burnt every evening to preserve, throughout the night, the wholesome heat of a setting sun. The mountain sides protected it against the north winds; on the south a deep curtain of tufted pines prevented the noontide heat from making its roof and walls like the burning roof and walls of a furnace; and before its mouth fled, with a plaintive voice as of regret, a little warbling stream, refreshing the atmosphere and shedding upon the smooth, verdant turf, enameled with humble flowers, the pure dew of its beneficent waters.

But two human beings, with some goats nearly always capriciously hanging over the highest points of the neighboring rocks, inhabited this cave scooped out in the mountain depths by unknown hands and at an unknown period.

These two beings were an old man, past seventy, and a youth, almost a child, who numbered scarcely fourteen years.

Both possessed, in periods of life so different, one under

a thick crown of white hair, the other under his luxuriant light tresses, that beauty of antiquity which awakens dreams either of the enchantments of days that are past, or the more intoxicating joys of days yet to come. The one had that profound charm of old age it remembers when falling asleep, the other that touching grace of youth which smiles at the moment of awaking. And, what is singular, both countenances wore the same expression; it was sweet and calm in the child, as it was peaceful and good in the old man. These two beings loved each other as two men love whose thoughts are fixed on Heaven. The child called the old man father, and the old man gave the child no name but the sweet one of son. They had lived together about six years. One day, on his return from a long journey, the old man entered his cave, leading a child, and the child had never quitted his home but once since, and then, during the absence of his father who, before setting out, had confided his son to another old man, Osius, then the holy Bishop of Cordova.

Our readers have already divined who these two beings were, and know under what circumstances that friendship had begun which now blended the existence of both into one. The old man was that Agatho who, one night at Rome, had welcomed to his heart a little slave that, bleeding and torn, had been pitched out from a patrician dwelling, near a corner of whose limits Agatho had picked him up; and this child was that little slave to whom his saviour, after taking him to Spain, had given the name of Severian. Agatho, at the moment when God directed his steps towards this poor child who was restored to animation and consciousness in his arms, had just returned from Thrace, where he had confirmed Eva in the first ardor of her renovation, and where he had heard the confession of all the disorders preceding this illustrious conversion, almost culminating in martyrdom.

He, also, had formerly known the tempest of the passions, but had never succumbed to their violence. At an early hour, feeling that emptiness of heart which invites to solitude, he had sought her as an assured refuge against the most poignant anguish.

God, who guides the steps of those thirsting for His peace, had conducted him to this cave where, for more than

thirty years, he had lived alone, before his home was animated by the presence of this child, restored to existence in the thick folds of his coarse tunic. But this solitary life, this so longed for repose, was neither the life nor the repose of the man who knows not the world, and who wishes to hear no more the confused noise of its storms. Agatho had contemned the world, but he had known it; he had been thrown, like many others, into the thickest of its conflicts, and the shrill, piercing notes, which had not surprised his early youth, could not now trouble his old age.

Agatho was the valiant soldier who, after the victory, lays off his armor, yet awaits but the first summons to gird himself anew; or the fatigued traveler who, for a moment, seated at the end of the road, is all ready to resume his sandals and lean again upon his staff if, on the horizon, he perceives that which may require a continuation of his journey.

This man, humble and gentle, yet firm and hopeful, concealing himself as much as possible in retreat, yet leaving it without visible regret, solitary in a cave, yet suddenly reappearing in the world more active and intrepid in the service of God than Fulgentius in that of the Emperors, represented, at this epoch in the primitive Church, a class (still very small) of fervent propagators of its virtues, and, for this reason, it behooves us to give a short sketch of their life and duties, almost unknown at the present day.

They were called "continents."

Chastity was the virtue that made them strong in rendering them venerable; chastity drew upon them the respect of the multitude; chastity was, moreover, the cuirass with which they girded their reins, when it was necessary to expose themselves anew to blows in the grand combat of life.

A century later, and even for a long time after, these "continents" became, for civil society, a cause of serious prejudice, and for the Church, a disagreeable and grave embarrassment.*

*They became the occasion of the first law which was passed to annul all donations, either by word of mouth or will, which they had induced. (See the constitution of the Emperors Valentinian and Valens A. D. 370, addressed to Pope Damascus, to be publicly read in all the churches of Rome, and which makes the law 20th, Theodos. Code, Lib. XVI, Tit. II de Episcop. Eccles. et Cler. See also Novel 123 of Just, and Novel 33 of the Empr. Leon.)—On the other side, the

But at the period we contemplate, these "continents" were, on the contrary, one of the benedictions of the still persecuted Church, and the intrepid auxiliaries of its Bishops, often obliged to conceal themselves from the pursuit of implacable enemies.

These men, who preceded the Pauls, the Anthonies, the Hilarions and the Pacomiuses of the desert, and who showed the way to Missionaries of a later period, were not then found in the dwellings of opulent patricians, but in the most abandoned solitudes, situated at a short distance from the seat of grand episcopal sees. They served as messengers between the faithful, yet dispersed, and transmitted to distant churches their pastors' communications. If there was a rumor of dissension on some point, we see them hasten thither to examine it and render an account; if, on the contrary, a wholesome, pious thought, useful to the Church, arose in some great soul, they went like the cloud containing the refreshing rain of days, to spread this thought afar, and among all those to be found on their way.

In their distant travels, remarking those places where misery and despair held sway, they soon returned loaded with gifts from more favored countries, to distribute among the afflicted and suffering.

These are the men whom the painful fatigues of long journeys, the sight of sickness without succor, new-born infants exposed in the most dreary places, old age everywhere abandoned, beggars repulsed as vile animals and dying of hunger all along the highways of the Empire, had inspired (either because they themselves had tasted these bitter woes or solaced these forsaken ones) with the idea, particularly Christian, of those public establishments, now called charitable institutions.

We owe to them, at least in part, the first asylums opened by charity to the sick (nosocomia), to infants (brephotrophia), to orphans (orphanotrophia), to old age (gerontoco-

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the council of Carthage, held A. D. 397, canon 38, Cod. African., page 833, Tome I, Concil. edit. Hardoin was obliged to severely condemn their manœuvres (See also Cresconius Breviario, cap. 225). St. Jerome, too, complains of them (Epist. 2 ad Nepotianum; epist. 3 in epitaphio Nepotiani; epist. 28 ad Eustochium), also St. Ambrose (Officiorum lib. I, cap. 20; serm. 65 in domin. 22 post Pentecosten, Tome V, page 96, Paris edit. 1614); and St. Augustine, epist. 199 et 262, Edit. Benedict.

mia), to the disabled poor (ptochotrophia), to travelers succumbing to weakness and exhaustion (xenodochia),—asylums which their hands began to multiply on all sides from the rich offerings of Christian widows and virgins moved with compassion at the picture of such great miseries as these men had frequently witnessed and now recounted to them.*

Let us not forget to remark that these first Missionaries of the faith, these fearless ambassadors of charity, on their return, and even before resting from the fatigue of their painful excursions, never failed of repairing to Rome (often turning far out of their path to reach that city), because, towards Rome converged all the glances of the faithful; at Rome was he to whom they must render an account of the most feeble pulsations of all hearts. This last duty accomplished, we see these messengers of peace and union, these humble pilgrims mostly unknown, like the bird, whose wing leaves no trace in the air, and which flies towards climes fragrant with the warm breath of spring, regain, over immense spaces, their dear solitudes, burying themselves therein with ineffable joy, but ready, at the first call, to quit them again, and, for the least necessities of their brethren in the Faith, to re-commence their travels over the world.

Such was Agatho, such, at least, he had been during the long years of a life entirely employed in these painful labors. But for some time age had arrested his great zeal, and obliged him to forego those journeys now beyond his strength.

He quitted no more the cave which he had always loved, and now loved still more, since Severian shared it with him.

Moreover, the holy old man saw in Severian his successor, and often had his heart leaped for joy in recognizing what an admirable nature God had been pleased to bestow upon the child confided to his care. And as the good laborer cheerfully and assiduously cultivates the field whose fertility

* We must upon this passage cite numerous au'horities. We point out the following sources: all the XVI book of the Theodosian code, with the commentaries of Godefroy and Ritter. See also in the code of Justinian and in his novels, the numerous texts relating to the possessions of churches and monasteries, also those relating to the origin of religious communities and monks.—See, in fine, the letters of St. Jerome and some writings of contemporary Fathers. The whole history of Christian charity's first efforts, is contained in the texts we have just mentioned.

he has divined, so Agatho bent all the powers of his soul to the development of those happy dispositions foreseen in him who, already at an age so tender, was, to his father, like another self. Every night the child, who had been entertained during the day by thoughts of the happiness it would one day be his turn to taste in succoring all who suffered, slept in the sweet hope of soon being able to launch out into his new life; and his dreams were those in which Charity moistens the eyes with her most humid tears, and dilates the heart with her most secret enchantments.

CHAPTER XX.

FATHER AND SON.

ONE evening, after the ordinary labors of the day, for Agatho, notwithstanding his great age, did not wish his hands to remain inactive, the old man rested at the entrance of his cave, having before him the rustic table upon which Severian had placed two loaves of bread, with some dried figs, some almonds, walnuts, and other fruits more savory gathered from the neighboring trees. The milk was still wanting to this frugal supper, which was every day the same, and Agatho smiled pleasantly because the goat, which was to furnish it, eluded every attempt of the child who stood ready, vessel in hand, to milk.

The capricious animal, every time Severian tried to approach her, bounded to the other side of the stream, or over the sharp pointed aloes enclosing the little domain, or scrambled up the steepest part of the mountain and there, remaining immoveable upon an inaccessible rock, defied all efforts of the child who, from below, vainly contemplated her hanging breasts, the principal hope of their repast.

The evening was warm and the perspiration ran down Severian's face. He began to lose patience, and Agatho, who always smiled, remarked with some astonishment upon his countenance, habitually serene, all the clouds of a violent anger.

For some time yet, the old man let the child contest the goat's cunning and activity, but seeing that she continually escaped him, also, that Severian displayed more and more irritation, even stamping his foot upon the ground, and menacing the stubborn animal with the milking vessel, as if it had been a stone that he wished to throw at her, Agatho rose from his seat, detached from a flowering shrub one of its greenest branches, covered it with salt, and advancing slowly a few steps towards the goat, showed her the perfumed branch, at the same time, calling her to him in a moderate voice, and with a caressing gesture.

She, at first restless, fixed upon the old man her rebellious, astonished eyes; but when the shrub's odorous perfume, mingled with the sharper flavor of the salt, mounted to her on the evening breeze, she made a grand leap, as of satisfaction, upon the peak over which she was hanging, and precipitately descending the rock, hastened to feed upon the beautiful branch, and lick the hand that had offered it. Severian could then milk her, and the frothy milk was soon ready for the supper which awaited it.

The old man, whilst tranquilly and silently partaking of his nourishment, was engaged in observing Severian, who wiped the perspiration from his face, and tempered with milk the heat of his panting breast.

"Father," at last murmured the child, "how rebellious the goat was to me, and how obedient to you!"

"My son, God has willed that this day should finish by a beautiful lesson, and one of His grand instructions."

"How is that, father?"

"The goat is an image of a great many souls whom thou wilt meet one day, and whom thou wilt vainly pursue."

"And what must I do, father, to reach them?"

"What I have just done, and what thou couldst not hit upon. When they have fled to the highest places and regard thee with pity and derision, it is necessary to seek some perfume which attracts them, or some food for which they hunger, and then thou wilt see them come to thee as came the goat, which, on the contrary, fled from thee the more anger thou didst show, and the more thou didst threaten her."

"Are there then branches of shrubs for souls, and salt for which they are hungry?"

"Yes, my son, the wisdom of God is the salt, and his love is the perfume. With this wisdom and this love thou canst attract all men."

"But how show to men this wisdom which is that of God, and this love which is only in Him?"

"Thou wilt show the wisdom of God in being always humble and little before the world, in despising its joys, in disdaining its honors and riches, in crushing under foot its vanities and passions; and thou wilt show His love by going to all who need relief in misfortune, consolation in sadness, succor in misery, support when fainting, protection when oppressed, assistance when forsaken. Thou wilt never laugh with those who laugh, but thou wilt weep with those who weep; thou wilt never rejoice with those who are happy, but thou wilt suffer with those who suffer; thou wilt resist the strong and defend the weak; thou wilt quit the persecutor and place thyself on the side of the persecuted; thou wilt not threaten with those who threaten, but thou wilt stretch out thy arm and hand over those who are threatened; in a word, thou wilt love always, because it is in loving and doing what I have just said, the wisdom of God being principally in His love, that man can manifest God's love in loving, as He did those whom He loved above all others, the miserable, the abandoned, the humble, the weak, the oppressed, the poor, all who suffer, or are near fainting under the burdens of life."

"Oh! my father," said Severian, rising from the table, and seizing the old man's hand, which he kissed with respectful tenderness, "I now see very well that I had not understood the example of the goat; but neither did I know that God had thus placed in little things his most instructive lessons."

"Become well impressed with the fact, my son, that thou mayest always recollect it, there is nothing that God does not use, almost every instant, for our enlightenment and instruction. Yes, every step we make, everything we see, all that surrounds us, all that we think, or feel, all can be useful to us, were we to reflect a little. But, my son, thou hast not yet perceived everything that the indocile goat teaches thee."

"Truly! my father. And what then is there in it that I have not noticed?"

"My son, the goat came to me because I called her, which, doubtless, she would not have done had I contented myself with offering her the branch, and, especially, if like thyself, I had frightened and threatened her. This, also, thou must never forget when thou wilt be among men as I have been. They are never overcome by menaces or bribes, either of evil or good, but in the manner and by the means God wishes do they submit and obey Him or those who are His representatives on earth. But this is not all, it does not suffice, not to threaten men, it does not suffice even to offer them at a distance what seems to be good and pleasant; they must also be called. They have so little faith in the good we wish to do them, that at first they are astonished and regard it as a snare. They do not approach unless the lips encourages them, and the hand invites to confidence. Behold, my son, all there was to be learned from the example of the goat; truly did I say, that this beautiful day would not terminate without being for thee, by Divine permission, one of profitable instruction."

"Never, my father, will I forget the goat, and what, by means of it, you have taught me. How I long to be older and more robust, that I may begin the great journeys you have made, and go, like you, in search of all who need succor!"

"In time, my son; and I hope God will accord me sufficient length of days to put in thy hand the staff which sustained me so many years, and in thy heart all the strength and mercy with which it should be filled to shed upon others."

"Do you know, father, that I have a big debt to acquit myself of towards you, and the unfortunate ones of whom you spoke just now? Is it not to you I owe my deliverance from death and slavery, and ought I not, out of gratitude to you, return fivefold, to a great number of men, what you have done for me?"

"Thou art right, my son; speak not of me, but of God who placed thee in my way and willed, when I lifted thee in my arms, that thou shouldst continue to live. Ah! yes, thou owest much to God, and thou canst never prove thy gratitude to Him except in multiplying thyself, as it were, and exhausting all the strength of thy soul and body for

those whom He will cause thee to meet. Charity, my son, is one of the greatest means we have of testifying to God our gratitude; but it is He who gives us the occasions of exercising this virtue, and He who wishes it to operate the most wonderful effects Some other time, I will give thee an account of its effects on a poor woman whom I knew in Thrace, and who is one of the admirable examples of what charity can do. Not only does it fill the heart of him who exercises it with the sweetest consolations, but even communicates to the receiver ineffable desires, and becomes the principle of his transformation. That is what happened in the case of this poor woman whom I twice visited; the charity she had experienced from some other women, as needy as herself, so worked upon her heart, that in a little while God judged her worthy of confessing His name and made of her almost a martyr."

"Is this holy woman still living?"

"Yes, my son, she is actually at Rome in the house of a noble matron who gladly received her. Ah! I wish that thou couldst one day know her as I myself have known her! Thou wouldst see what God can make of a heart when He invades it by charity."

It was thus the old man every day, making use of the smallest events of our ordinary existence, instructed him whom he called son, and prepared him to walk in the path that he himself had once trodden.

Evening was generally the time chosen for these familiar conversations, for the day, as we have already said, was devoted to manual labor; moreover, Agatho thought, and rightly too, that the hours immediately preceding night are best adapted for disposing the mind to grand reflections, and the heart to durable sentiments. He said that sleep lulls all our inclinations, good or bad; that on awaking, the good desires refreshed and more active, can temper or even entirely prevail over the bad.

The old man never exhausted with the child the subjects presented in these moments of sweet intimacy. Usually, he contented himself with awakening Severian's intelligence upon some point, and then endeavored to moderate the great ardor which immediately flashed out in his young charge. This ardor sometimes disturbed Agatho, for the boy who

eagerly devoured all these instructive and edifying words was still very young.

Agatho, with reason, feared premature flowers; they fall quickly, and the tree, at the proper season, fails to yield the expected fruit.

The evening we mention, he almost reproached himself with having gone beyond his habitual prudence, for he remarked in Severian such sudden emotions of thought and heart, as if the child were plunged in an ecstasy, or carried towards the future upon wings of fire.

Both now kept a profound silence. Agatho gave himself up to his reflections in observing his son with all the prepossessions of paternal solicitude; Severian paid attention to the old man no longer, and upon his deeply flushed countenance reappeared the emotions at first excited by his contest with the goat, and now become even stronger at the very name of charity, whose sacred flame always consumed his bowels with her divine ardors.

We could have said that, around these two, nature had wished to harmonize with the interior voices, of which they no longer heard but the murmur.

Never, indeed, did a calmer magnificence of more beautiful splendors environ two beings, for whom this world seemed as a footstool which helped them to rise towards Heaven.

The sun descended rapidly behind an angle of the neighboring mountains, casting in profusion the gold of its last fires upon the mountain peaks, the summits of lofty trees, and here and there upon the smooth sides of some high hills. The plain disposed itself for sleep, indeed, in allowing to escape from its bosom those dull sounds which are as the echo of its plaints, and the testimony of its concealed sorrows. Above the long stalks of thick herbage, now motionless, above the flowering shrubs scattered over the sand, and unruffled by a single breath, passed, and repassed, like swans borne gently on the waters, the white flakes of light clouds, that a furtive ray shadowed by turns with reflections of pink, yellow, or violet. The atmosphere contained those waves of opal-tinted vapor that, in the land of Spain, mount even to the depths of its blue sky, beyond which began to shine, from the bosom of its immensity, the

veiled gleams of the stars of night. Only the piercing and lugubrious cries of nocturnal birds, from time to time, broke the universal silence, and drowned the confused notes that myriad insects, buried under the herbage, harmoniously mingled with the sighing breeze. Severian still lifted, towards the starry vault of Heaven, his countenance, always radiant with enthusiasm, but now, nevertheless, beginning to show signs of dreamy langour; Agatho, who, for some moments had ceased to follow upon the child's features the last vestiges of impressions almost at an end, contemplated afar the city's white walls, and the feeble light of the fires illuminating the interior of its houses. A quick contraction of his heavy eyebrows alone marked the displeasure which, in this silent contemplation, he felt at sight of the temple of Janus, a sombre mass, commanding the course of that river whose waters bathed the first steps of its portico.

Suddenly, the old man started, for he seemed to distinguish, amidst the obscurity commencing to envelop the plain, a person walking rapidly along the windings of the only road that, from Cordova, led to this solitary cave. Then Agatho lightly touched Severian's arm, and said:

"Look, my son, I believe I am not mistaken. Is it not a messenger that I catch a glimpse of below, coming towards us?"

"Yes, father," answered the young man, aroused from his reverie by the old man's touch, and after having attentively considered the point of the horizon indicated by Agatho's extended hand, "yes, it is a messenger who climbs these hills, and he will very soon reach us."

Agatho hastily rose from his seat, and followed by Severian, directed his steps towards the entrance of his little domain, that he might receive with honor him whom he supposed to be an envoy of Osius. The stranger soon accomplished the distance still separating him from the two solitaries; and when in their presence, bowing respectfully before Agatho, and giving him a letter which he had drawn from a fold of his tunic, he said:

"From Aula Plautia Laterana, whose humble servant I am, and who has just arrived on her estate."

"Aula Plautia Laterana is in this county!" quickly

exclaimed the old man, repeating, with astonishment, the name he had heard, and seizing the letter the envoy had brought.

"Yes, father," again affirmed the messenger, with another inclination. "Aula Plautia Laterana is at Cordova, and writes you word, I believe, that to-morrow she will visit you with her daughter who has accompanied her on the journey."

"They will be very welcome," said the old man, inviting him to enter the cave and rest, or take some nourishment.

But the servant of Aula Plautia Laterana, kissing the old man's hand in token of gratitude, thanked him, but declined the kindness, and immediately set out on his return, that he might report to the noble matron the favorable answer she had received.

Some minutes after his departure, night having closed around them, Agatho and Severian re-entered the cave, and extended themselves upon their bed of leaves, to taste that repose which, at the first gleam of dawn, would be interrupted by the bleating of their goats.

CHAPTER XXI.

AGATHO'S TWINS.

AULA on her arrival in Spain, was self-willed, capricious, indocile, very much like the goat mentioned in the preceding chapter.

At first sight of the two solitaries whom her mother hastened to visit, she was singularly disgusted. Agatho's long white beard descending even to his breast, as well as Severien's coarse, brown tunic, inspired within her heart no sentiments but those of contempt. This style of dress was, indeed, far different from those vestments she had been accustomed to see at Rome, and whose flowing, graceful folds added so much to the elegant appearance of the young "clarissimi"* who wore them. The slaves that served Aula in her father's house were better dressed than this

*One of the titles which were beginning to be bestowed on persons of distinction.

Agatho and this Severian, who would scarcely bear a favorable comparison with the venders of vegetables she had sometimes perceived upon the Forum Olitorium,* when passing by the theatre of Marcellus, and looking curiously at the milky column, placed in the centre of the market, because she had been told that it was there were exposed the new born infants abandoned by their parents. And then what a singular dwelling, this isolated cave amidst the mountains, and containing no other furniture than two or three stools used for chairs, a rough wooden table, some coarse wooden vessels for their food, and some implements for gardening and work.

Aula thought it very strange that this old man and the child, whom he called his son, should cultivate the earth with their own hands, and themselves prepare the very simple food for their repasts. How could her mother seek, as she did every day, the society of such people whom, doubtless, she would not have suffered to approach her at Rome? How could she pass long hours in conversation with this old man, who ranked below the last "villicus" of her estate at Latium? For, indeed, Aula Plautia Laterana did not fail to visit Agatho as often as she could, and pour into his bosom the woes of her heart so deeply tried, and still bleeding with the wound which had been made by the separation from her son.

Plautia, for a long time, had known Agatho during the journeys he formerly made to Rome, but Aula being then much too young to notice the old man, whose visits to her mother's house were of short duration, we can easily understand the young girl's surprise at suddenly seeing herself in the presence of persons, whose exterior and habits were so unlike anything she had ever heard of.

Notwithstanding Aula's first impression, it happened, nevertheless, that she herself soon wondered at certain things which naturally gained upon her affections, and gradually effaced those supremely disdainful thougths she had once entertained for the lonely cave and its inhabitants.

Thus, one day when her mother had not followed the mountain path, Aula felt wearied and out of spirits. What

* Vegetable market.

was the result? She found that her father's estate, which had always been much neglected, and which was, moreover, situated in the midst of a plain on the other side of Cordova, was not equal to Agatho's little enclosure, with its magnificent view, its pretty stream, its goats giving such good milk, and the least spot of ground covered with verdure and flowers.

And the people on her father's estate, could it be said that they resembled Agatho and Severian? Decidedly not. They were also tillers of the earth, and dressed very much like the two solitaries—but what tillers! coarse, slovenly, without education, almost without language, for Aula could not understand what they said, whilst she hung with delight upon the words of Agatho as he related to her in the purest Latin or Greek* some of the touching episodes of his long journeys.

"What a handsome old man!" from time to time murmured Aula, when thinking of Agatho. "What gentleness and calmness in his eyes! And what a ray of heaven in the expression of his son! Their vestments are poor, but there could be found none more becoming to Agatho's white hair or Severian's youth."

These were Aula's reflections at the end of some months passed in Spain, and on the days her mother omitted their visit to the mountain. This change in her ideas was entirely due to the force of some simple and touching events, that had taken place at an early period of her acquaintance with the solitaries.

Once Aula, wearied and out of humor, was seated not far from Severian, who occupied himself in removing the earth that he might plant the young shoots of some common vegetables. Aula smiled disdainfully and shrugged her shoulders; she even went beyond these simple gestures, and spared not sneering words; then vexed still more at the inattention of Severian, who, entirely devoted to his work, showed the utmost indifference to her sarcasms, she, doubtless, to render them more direct and sensible, collected all the pebbles he let fall, and made him the incessant butt of her attacks. But Severian remained as insensible

* At this epoch, Greek was spoken at Rome as well as the Latin by persons of a certain class who learned it in infancy.

to the pebbles, as he had been indifferent to the sneers; not for one instant did he discontinue his work, and it was Aula who, after awhile beginning to reflect upon her conduct, felt ashamed of herself and wept bitterly.

Another time she had perceived in the little stream some pretty fish, and vainly employed a part of the day in trying to catch them.

The fish, more cunning than herself, always escaped for want of a net, and Aula was much dissatisfied when, in the evening, she and her mother returned from the cave.

On going back the next day, what was her surprise to see Agatho gravely seated on his rustic bench, and shuttle in hand, just finishing the close meshes of a fishing tackle which, smiling, he soon gave to the young girl.

Who was still more confused, though well satisfied at the possession of what she had so much desired the previous day. It was Aula who, blushing, looked at the net without finding words to thank the old man for his kindness.

What! Agatho had thought of her! He had thus guessed the pleasure it would afford her to fish in his stream. He himself had wished to prepare her the means. He was really very good, this old solitary, notwithstanding his austerity, and his appearance, at first, a little frightful. Yes, he was very good, and no one would have bestowed kinder attention upon this child, whose fine natural dispositions he had divined, and whose generous inclinations, though herself unconscious of it, he endeavored to direct.

Kindness alone was the grand means he employed, and he made Aula feel it under every form.

When the charming head of her whom he called also his daughter appeared at the extremity of the road, and even before her last steps had reached the boundary of the little enclosure, one might have heard the old man's voice joyfully crying out:

"Go, Severian, to the goat! to the goat!"

And he himself hastened to arrange the wooden table, and why? That Aula, heated by her fatiguing walk, might be immediately refreshed with the milk Severian brought, and the fine fruits Agatho placed near the vessel, overflowing with the savory froth of its fragrant liquid.

Consequently, what was to be, did, indeed, happen. Very soon for Aula there were no feast days except those when

she went to the mountain, and no days of great sadness, except when compelled to remain at home.

After a little while, Plautia fearing to trouble the two solitaries, abstained more frequently from visiting them with her daughter. Moreover, she had been rendered calmer by her first conversations with Agatho, and needed his consolations less than she had in the beginning. Aula now passed many wearisome days, and on these days, it must be said, she made no effort to overcome herself, or prevent those around from feeling all the effects of her bad humor.

But how great her joy when, on the contrary, Plautia gave the signal for departure, and with Aula, followed the narrow path leading to the little enclosure.

Was not this habitation a grotto of sweet perfumes, which no one could leave without bearing away, at least, a little of the fragrance there inhaled?

From Aula's first stay in Spain, she carried back to Rome that good odor of holy virtues which always precedes their mysterious bloom. Her second sojourn gave her reflection. And when reflection comes to those who have been able to see and compare, we can feel assured that wisdom is not far off. As to the third visit, Aula——

But one word concerning this last which was of short duration, and the event which suddenly brought it to a close.

This event was the death of Fulgentius, the news reaching Aula Plautia Laterana but a few months after she had returned to Spain.

Here is how his death happened:

One day at Nicomedia, whilst Diocletian (who after giving himself a colleague, thought, as we have already said, of creating two Cæsars) was passing through the midst of the laborers occupied in demolishing and reconstructing the new capital, which he wished to make another Rome, these laborers surrounding him, cried out:

"Fulgentius for Cæsar! we want Fulgentius!"

These cries and demonstrations, recalling under another form the pretorian tumults, were far from pleasing to the Emperor, but being a very prudent man, he concealed his dissatisfaction, and even promised the workmen to regard their desires.

Returning to the palace, he thus addressed one of his confidants:

"We must, in some way, cause the name of Fulgentius to be heard no more!"

And the confidant, endeavoring to find the surest means, and discovering that near Fulgentius was a young slave whose plans were singularly thwarted by his master, advised then the death of this master, which took place a short time after the acclamations heard by Diocletian, and so well managed was the scheme, that few persons suspected Fulgentius had been poisoned.

Aula Plautia Laterana, learning, at the same time, the death of her husband, and arrangements of her son to set out immediately for Rome, hastened, on her part, to quit Spain, where she was never more to return.

And now, to understand well what Aula had become during this last sojourn, let us hear Agatho speaking to her mother the day before their departure:

"I have the happiness," said the venerable solitary, in finishing a long conversation, "of having two children, Aula and Severian. They are my twins. They are not alike, but both have great souls. Severian—and I am rejoiced at it—will cause me to be easily forgotten in all those places where my feet have trodden, for but a few years hence, and he will follow in my footsteps. He will be the apostle of charity and love. Aula will always preserve her inclination for the world, she will continue to be a little proud, a little attached to the frivolities of rank, but she will cover these weaknesses by an incomparable dignity, and the secret ardors of sacrifice. Should the day of trial come, and, perhaps, we may see it, the patrician lady would neither, in desire nor courage, be inferior to the cenobite; they would still be twins in martyrdom, as they have been brother and sister in the pious recreations of their infancy. Whilst awaiting the hour of contest, which may, perhaps, be in store for them, God has destined one to spread abroad the truths of His faith, the other to make these truths loved and respected in Rome. Our two children, Plautia, have a beautiful part assigned them, and I, thanking God for it, can die in peace, whilst you live, blessing Him in acknowlment of His gifts."

It was thus, at sixteen years, Aula left Spain.

Plautia, on arriving at Rome, there hoped to resume the charge of her son; but we already know how complete an ascendancy Furius had gained over him, and that Aulus, enjoying his father's immense fortune, would not prefer the holy joys of his mother's dwelling to the seductions and allurements of Rome.

And now ten years have fled.

Aula, we have said, is twenty-six. Is she, indeed, the wife, that in his insolent temerity, Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus, the patrician slave, flattered himself of obtaining? How will he even dare persevere in this strange design, and by what means make it known to her who is the object, and who, even at present, is far from suspecting such presumption? Aulus Plautius Lateranus has fled, and no one (Furius not excepted) knows the place of his dishonored retreat. Aula proves herself a little too sensitive, perhaps, to her brother's ruin, and the consequent disgrace of her family and name.

It has already been some years since Severian entered upon the career to which his ardent soul aspired. He now traverses the countries formerly visited by Agatho, and occasionally returns to his father to learn of him what has been already accomplished, and to imbibe new strength from the counsels of that holy man's experience.

The old recluse, who quits no more his cave where he continues to watch and pray, has yet that sap of life which, in the Anthonies and Pacomiuses, a hundred years of fastings and austerities did not exhaust; he hears no longer the tumults of the world, except such as reach him through Severian or the letters of Aula Plautia Laterana, now grieved by her son's dissipation.

Such is the situation upon which we must close the first part of this work.

PART SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

A CHARIOT RACE.

ABOUT eighteen months after the sale of the property belonging to Aulus Plautius Lateranus, the circumstances of which are known to our readers, there was spread through Rome a rumor, welcomed by the multitude with such manifestations of joy as would astonish us at the present day. It was said that a certain number of rich patricians soon, in the Circus Maximus, with their drivers and horses, were going to engage in one of those contests already known for a long time under the name of chariot races.

These exercises, offering no other perils than the fall, and sometimes death, of the drivers violently overturned in their shattered chariots, continued to divert the people, though much less than the gladiatorial combats, or those frightful contests of men with wild animals in the vast arena of the Coliseum or the amphitheatre of Statilius Taurus.* What, indeed, were a few broken limbs, or some brains scattered by chariot wheels, compared to those waves of human blood which had so profoundly inundated these arenas, that its lugubrious traces were not to be effaced, either by the continual renewal of the fine sand poured on them, or the incessant play of rakes?

But, at the period we study, bands of gladiators came no more so compliantly, as once they did, to feed the crowd with the varied spectacle of their "presents."†

Thus were formerly denominated the murders that the Mirmillones, the Retiarii, the Hoplomachi, the Dimachae, the Laqueatores, the Andabatae and other miserable wretches trained to these bloody sports, offered the public

* Name of the builder of this theatre in the reign of Augustus.
† Servius, in Æneid. III, vers, 67; Tertullian de Spectac. 12.

as a holocaust,* cutting one another's throats with smiles and gestures of satisfaction, and thus filling with delight more than a hundred thousand of the human species, frenzically applauding from their lofty seats shaken as by an earthquake. As to the lions of the Coliseum, Rome's conquests procuring her no more captives, and the persecutions against Christianity being lulled for awhile, there were no criminals to be thrown to the lions for food, and this was truly deplorable, as the magistrates, and even the Emperors themselves, from time to time, heard clamored around their paths by a discontented populace.

There remained, then, whilst expecting better, the chariot races.

And even these the Roman people but seldom enjoyed, for the imperial court sojourning only by chance in this ancient capital of the world, and all public offices being entirely at the choice and nomination of the Prince, there was no need of any rival or competitor's recommending himself to popular favor, by the pomp of games at the circus or magnificence of combats at the amphitheatre. Those proud Quirites, formerly so bold in demanding bread and shows ("panem et circenses"), had no longer any audacity except against the Christians. They trembled at uttering the least murmur which had revealed their poverty or their discontent, for both poverty and discontent equally displeased the masters of the Empire, and the frequent transportation of masses to the colonies of Thrace, Illyria, and Palestine, showed them the error of being hungry, or not knowing how to content themselves with the splendors of Rome, continual object of the entire world's increasing admiration.

However, if the public powers hastened not, as formerly, to flatter the dominant tastes of the multitude, the ostentation and vanity of upstarts sufficed to keep alive the memory of these ancient solemnities, and to maintain them with even some show of magnificence.

It was understood, then, that at an early day, to be made known by placards posted in the Forum, and the proclamations of heralds to the sound of trumpets, that a chariot race, lasting three days, would take place in the Circus Maximus.

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* "Publicæ voluptatis hostiæ," says Tertullian de Spectac, 19.

Following ancient usage, these placards and proclamations mentioned the citizens giving the games, the drivers of the chariots, and the horses, whose genealogy was never omitted, nor the preceding courses in which they had figured, and especially the triumphs they had won for their masters.

The first day was to witness the races of the "biga," or two wheeled chariots, drawn by two horses only; the second, those of the "triga," so named, because to the two horses abreast was added a third placed before; and the last, those of the "quadriga," with four horses abreast, which, being by far the noblest and most interesting, was, as such, reserved to citizens of distinction, who sometimes disdained not to mount their own chariots and contest the victory with the drivers of the other "factions."

This term, "faction," indicated the color under which the "biga, triga, and quadriga" were admitted to enter the lists as competitors for the prizes. Thus, there was the green faction, the blue, the red, the white,—all denoted by the color of the driver's tunic.*

The great interest of the races was to know which party or "faction" would, in the numberless tilts of each day, the greatest number of times arrive first at the gaol, and whose drivers would receive the most Idumean palms and laurel crowns interlaced by golden fillets with gold or silver leaves, and with great pomp awarded the victor by the "editor spectaculi," or public functionary presiding at the solemnity.†

At Constantinople, where, after the definite abolition of gladiatorial combats and contests with wild animals, chariot racing assumed an importance it had never attained at Rome, so warmly did the people contend for this or that "faction," that often the safety of the Empire depended upon these frivolous preferences, and in one day there perished about forty thousand persons, victims of a furious strife excited by the partizans of these colors, under which were concealed the most deadly animosities.

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*Domitian had established six factions, but this number was afterwards abandoned, probably because great confusion resulted from so many being engaged together in the same tilt.

†The palms and crowns reverted to the drivers' masters, and the drivers, when the games were over, received a reward in money.

But at Rome, the people yet contented themselves with betting, not merely on a "faction," but oftener on some particular driver or horse, and the stakes, placed immediately in the hands of a third party, were frequently such enormous sums, as would frighten the most determined sportsmen of our day.

However, the amateurs of this period could decide in advance and calculate their chances of a successful wager, by an attentive and scrutinous examination of the chariots, drivers and horses. It was customary to take these to the "Septa trigaria" a few days before the races; thus allowing the public an opportunity of inspection, and an author affirms that there were men who, from morning till night, discouraged neither by rain nor scorching suns, studied minutely the merits and demerits of the horses and drivers.* This examination was permitted even until the last moment in the "carceres," a kind of carriage house from which the "quadriga" issued, and, whilst awaiting the signal for departure, were arranged in a row before the line whitened with chalk, "alba linea," and stretched across the arena by two little marble columns, "hermulæ."

Without these indispensable details, and some others which very naturally introduce themselves into what we are going to relate, it would be impossible for us to carry out our plan of presenting our readers a complete description of a chariot race, or a picture of all the incidents, more or less interesting, never failing to arise from the numerous contests of each day, which sometimes amounted to thirty.

We shall simply give that part of the placard devoted to the regulations of the last day, and even limit ourselves to what concerned the various rivals, before we describe this contest of honor and distinction by which the games were terminated. It was conceived in the following form, very little different from that used at present:

Green: Cnæus Furius Nomentanus. Driver: Victoriosus.—Horses: Triumphus, Ardens, Indomitus, Celer.

Blue: Reburrus.† Driver: Edax.—Horses: Meta, Les-

*Ab ortu solis ad vesperam sole fatiscunt vel pluviis, per minutias aurigarum equorumque præcipue, vel delicta scrutantes. (Ammianus Marcellin, Lib. XIV, cap. 6.)

† 1—2. Reburrus, Fabunius, upstarts in the time of Ammianus Marcellinus, and mentioned by him as great amateurs of racing,

bia, Philaenium, Musca. (Mares perfectly white, matched with the greatest care.)—Age, five years.

Red: Fabunius.[2] Driver: Cares.—Horses: Notatus, Stridens, Axis, Lepus.

White: The master will drive his own chariot and desires to remain unknown. He will wear a mask not to be removed unless victorious.—Horses: The horses of Pluto.

We must admit that this was to excite the spectators' curiosity, and, certainly, no more effectual mode could have been chosen.

When, on the first morning of the races, Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus, in great pomp, repaired to the Circus Maximus, he was astonished that the multitude, who, for a long time, had encumbered every arrival,* eagerly joining its ranks and penetrating the enclosure, did not gather around him with those manifestations of strong sympathy, which, on the contrary, they testified in his presence for other personages whose passage they greeted with loud acclamations. And yet he had taken care to have circulated, on all sides, the report that he was one of the number contributing most generously towards the splendor of the races about to commence; besides, he was attended by one of those retinues which, astonishing a vulgar stupidity, nearly always excite its spontaneous applauses.

But the public appeared to have reserved all its expressions of admiration for the drivers and horses preceding his, for on no side arose any cry of favor, either to thank the generous patrician or to extol his gaudy surroundings. It even seemed to Cnæus Furius Nomentanus, languidly extended upon the rich cushions of his litter, borne by eight slaves, that some hoots were heard from the proletarians as he passed along their innumerable ranks, and that these hoots were addressed to him; but probably he was mistaken, for that was utterly impossible.

Be it as it may, little satisfied with what he had seen, and still less with what he believed he had heard, Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus, having entered the enclosure of the Circus Maximus, took his place next to the tribunal of the magistrate presiding over the games, and a post of honor which

*Am. Marcel. says that the people passed the night in neighbbring hotels ("vinariis"), employing the hours in games of chance.

he had carefully secured in advance by the payment of a considerable sum. Moreover, being very near the "metæ," or stations, at which he, who after seven revolutions around the "Spina," * should arrive first would be declared victor, it was the best point for enjoying a view of the races, and judging of the drivers' efforts and skill.

Commodiously installed in the seat of honor, received with a gracious smile by the presiding magistrate, who already occupied his tribunal, Cnæus Furius Nomentanus soon forgot his first impressions, and, his countenance beaming with content, he began to cast his eyes over those vast spaces where were tumultuously collected a hundred and fifty thousand spectators. Before him was the Spina where slaves stood holding the Idumean palms and laurel crowns, which, from afar, were displayed to the competitors as an incentive to victory. Not for one instant did he doubt that these palms and crowns would be his, for Victoriosus was a driver worthy of his name, and Triumphus, Ardens, Indomitus, Celer, were horses not to be excelled.

Notwithstanding all this, the first day of the races was not favorable to him who secretly feasted upon such shining hopes. It could have been said that Cnæus Furius Nomentanus was, himself, a part of the spectacle, for he evidently served as a target, for we know not how many sneering looks, cast upon him this time, with the well marked intention of being followed by insulting mockeries. Gestures and words accompanying these looks pointed him out to the outrages of the multitude.

"What was the cause of this?" asked Cnæus Furius Nomentanus of himself, much surprised at all these manifestations, and we ourselves ask the same question, confessing that we know no more than he and are equally astonished; for there was nothing either in his attitude or the retinue he had brought to the games, and which still surrounded him, that afforded matter for such insolence.

* The "Spina" was a long ridge, about eleven Roman feet (four yards) in height, dividing the arena into two equal parts, and around which the chariots engaged in the contest were to turn. Its length was equal to two thirds that of the Circus. It was of marble mason work, and covered with obelisks and statues of divinities. At each of its two extremities, were three stations "metæ," like little turrets, which they really were in form; but the point of victory was marked only by those on the side of the "carceres," that is, on the side next to the entrance of the Circus Maximus. This circus was so vast, that the Spina, seven times doubled, was equal to five Roman miles.

But the second day was even worse for the opulent patrician, who, in reappearing at the Circus with a retinue yet more magnificent than that of the preceding day, had believed that all these indignities (doubtless due to the jealous efforts of a secret rivalry discouraged by want of success), would not be renewed. At these shows in the amphitheatre the Roman people resumed much of its ancient liberty, and all ancient authors within reach attest that it was carried to the utmost verge of license against those who, from some reason or other, had incurred the displeasure of the multitude.

Let us remark well, moreover, that power, whatever it may be, or whatever the times, can be bold and even tyrannical when the individuals beneath its sway are isolated and without means of communication among themselves; but let it find itself face to face with a hundred and fifty thousand persons united upon one point, then it becomes timid and capitulates The capitulation here was that instead of stones with which, during the intervals of the race, the people often assailed a hated or despised citizen, they should manifest their antipathies by using only apples, cabbage stalks or carrots. As to cries, threats, imprecations, hoots, hisses and other demonstrations, often so violent that the frightened horses reared, they were not to be moderated, but must be allowed in all their intemperance.

The second day of the games, then, was unluckily marked for Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus by all manner of insults, and even at a certain moment, so intense was the shower of projectiles falling around him, that in a state of confusion which can be understood, but not described, he was obliged to leave his place and quit the Circus.

We repeat our question, to what was this owing? Probably to one of those cabals, often formed against citizens whose drivers and horses were dreaded by their competitors, endeavoring by these violent means to discourage the hero at the moment of victory.

CHAPTER II.

A WELL APPLIED STROKE OF THE WHIP.

BUT Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus possessed an audacity not easily beaten down.

Returned to his opulent dwelling, after some hours consumed in the impetuous outbursts of a violent anger, he became, upon reflection, a little calmer, and swore by his familiar demon that nothing should discourage him, if such was the end (which he could not doubt) proposed by rivals jealous of his assured triumph on the morrow.

Consequently, the third day of the races he reappeared at the games with the same retinue and same insolence, as if there had been no demonstrations against him. It even happened that he was able to congratulate himself upon having confronted this impertinent populace, and shown that he was a man able to laugh at its capricious manifestations; for the previous malevolence and hostilities had entirely ceased, he perceived around him nothing but sympathetic countenances. Yet he was interiorly vexed at hearing all the bets engaged, particularly upon the horses of Pluto, whose unknown master would drive them, himself, or upon the four white mares of Reburrus, whilst no one pronounced the name of his driver, or said one word about his team, as if they were not included or their defeat were already assured.

"It is singular," whispered the parvenu, with a deep sensation of involuntary anxiety, and seriously troubled at this inexplicable indifference. "What! Victoriosus, the celebrated jockey is thus neglected! What! horses like mine slighted for such as those of Fabunius, unknown to every one despite their high sounding names. These have a few bets upon them, whilst coursers like Indomitus and Celer, to say nothing of Triumphus and Ardens, accustomed to outstrip the swiftest teams, obtain not even the favor of a single wager! What does it mean?"

And the parvenu, delivered to these reflections, which in spite of him were anything but pleasant, could not restrain himself at times from saying, as if more assured:

"A cabal! All this a pure cabal! The effect of curiosity excited by this unknown! The horses of Pluto! I thought there were only those of Neptune! Very ingenious mode of gaining the applauses of a vulgar stupidity, but not of lessening my driver's merits or the swiftness of my horses' heels! We shall soon see what Pluto's chariot is worth against the green!"

Indeed, the day had advanced and now touched upon the moment, awaited by all with a feverish impatience—the moment which was to witness the last tilt reserved for the quadrille of honor. This quadrille was composed of four "quadriga," mounted, as we mentioned in the preceding chapter, by the drivers Victoriosus, belonging to Furius (color, green), Edax, to Reburrus (blue), Cares, to Fabunius (red), and the unknown (white), who would retain his mask unless victorious.

During the first and second days, the green color, or party most celebrated of all, boasting, moreover, the best horses and most skillful drivers, had maintained its high reputation, being far beyond the others in the number of its crowns and palms.

Since the morning of the last day it had notably failed, no one knew why; but Cnaeus Furius, who had chosen this color precisely because it promised the most triumphs, would probably arrive first in the quadrille of honor, and obtain for his party a success so much the more glorious, because of its having towards the last been momentarily compromised.

This was, at least, what the parvenu thought, though much vexed at not seeing the popular feeling in harmony with his own convictions, as we have just said, all the wagers being made upon the horses of Pluto, or the white mares of Reburrus, to the utter neglect of the green color, as if all had foreseen its complete and shameful defeat.

However, the moment arrived when, amid the profound silence of an innumerable multitude encumbering every step of the Circus, the presiding magistrate rose from his seat and cast into the arena the purple shred as a signal for the last tilt to begin. Immediately, trumpets and clarions sounded, all eyes were fixed upon the side of the "careeres," where eight "morateurs" let fall, with noise and din, the heavy iron bars securing the eight fastenings of the four gates,

from which darted forth rapidly, as a thunderbolt (an image of which might be seen in the sparks flying on all sides under the impatient horses' feet), the four "quadriga," about to engage in this supreme struggle.

A startling sound, like that of thunder in a tempest, but, at this moment, the testimony of a people's admiration for the charioteers' marvellous skill and horses' incomparable docility, shook the Circus Maximus to its depths, when these four chariots, more impetuous than whirlwinds, all stopped at one instant, and the coursers became immovable, at an equal distance from the two lines of chalked cord, and there, ranged abreast, awaited but the signal of departure.

There was not, perhaps, in the immense inclosure one single glance, at this moment, not fixed upon the "quadriga," and examining, with an ardent curiosity, the horses, the ornaments, and principally the drivers.

To the left, and a few palms only from the "Spina," which position his master had strictly enjoined him to secure, because it possessed the triple advantage of abridging the distance of turning more easily the extremities of the arena, and especially of embarrassing the other chariots' evolutions, standing erect in his chariot, his right hand extended by the tension of the reins, moderating the ardor of his impatient coursers, was Victoriosus, the charioteer of Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus, and one of great renown.

To do the parvenu justice, we must say that Victoriosus, clothed in his green tunic, the skirt striped with a large golden band, holding in his right hand the short handled whip, with two long leathern thongs that he waved above his head, his body proudly inclined, his disdainful lip, his confident look, was a picture worthy of admiration, and merited the victory which had frequently been awarded him in other races. The horses well accorded with such a driver. They were incontestably racers, and the foam whitening their bits attested the fire of youth. Their very light harness of green, dotted with golden nails, was displayed to advantage over their coats of beautiful dark bay, shaded with rings of a darker hue and regular as those of a panther. A green plume, waving to and fro with the least motion of their heads, completed their ornamentation which, except in color, was exactly alike for the horses of every "quadriga."

The charioteers were distinguished by the different color of their tunics, but those who had triumphed in preceding games could encircle their brows with the Olympic crown, and Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus, no less than Reburrus and Fabunius, had taken good care not to omit an ornament of such favorable augury.

Among them all, only the unknown bore no crown.

Next to Victoriosus was Cares, who drove the equally irreproachable horses of Fabunius. Cares also had endeavored to take the left in approaching the Spina, but luckier, or more expert, Victoriosus had obtained over him and the others this advantage. Yet, notwithstanding the merits of these two "quadriga," assuredly worthy the honors of this last tilt, universal interest was soon concentrated in the four white mares of Reburrus or, even more particularly, upon the horses of Pluto.

Never, indeed, had the like been seen, and never had it appeared more evident at once that between these two only could hesitate with outspread wings the goddess Victory, whose statue, mounted upon a brilliant chariot of gold and ivory, had, at the commencement of the games, been placed near the "meta," at which the driver who should outstrip his rivals would check his foaming horses' speed. Edax, charioteer of the fortunate Reburrus whose steeds would bear a favorable comparison with those we have already mentioned, could with difficulty restrain Meta, Lesbia, Philaenium and Musca, whose inflamed looks devoured the arena, and quivering limbs impatiently rubbed against their steel trappings. All was muscle, activity, suppleness in these four noble animals which, with floating mane and spotless coats the color of milk, would float through space like the fantastic vision of a dream.

The immobility of Pluto's horses, black as Erebus, yet marked on the face with a white star exactly alike in each, would have contrasted singularly with the fiery impetuosity of the mares of Reburrus, if as great a difference as that which exists between "black fluid" * and snow, ebony and ivory, the milky way and Tartarean paths had not already established this contrast. Ascended or not from the infer-

*Name given by the Romans to the ink they used.

nal regions to grace the sports of Rome, we recognize them, at first glance, as having been born in the fields of Thrace, and their immobility as that to which imagination easily attaches wings, so much life was there in the palpitation of their limbs, so much strength in the incessant play of their nerves, and so much fire in the ardent vapor of their quivering and widely distended nostrils.

The unknown master of these fiery coursers apparently unmanageable, which indeed they would have been for any but himself, needed only a light pressure of the reins to stop their greatest speed, or a breath, parting his lips like a scarcely audible whistle, to precipitate their flight, and render it like that of an arrow which passes through the air without being seen. This unknown, upon whom were bent, with devouring curiosity, the eager glances of a hundred and fifty thousand spectators, vainly endeavoring to divine the features hidden beneath the black mask he had so scrupulously worn, appeared to be a man somewhat above medium height, and evidently in the flower of a vigorous, distinguished youth.

Like the other charioteers, he was standing in his chariot, holding the reins in his left hand, and resting the right upon the flexible verge of a long lance-like whip, the cut thongs of which were certainly not intended to stimulate the ardor of his horses. His tunic, of the finest white linen, floated in the wind, and a purple strip, the exact width of the ancient "laticlavium," added still more to the mystery enveloping his person, as it indicated his patrician rank.

When, at the sound of clarions, fell the cord barring the entrance of the arena, his "quadriga," carried forward by the impetuous bound of its horses, left the other three behind, but he immediately tightened the reins, and, during four evolutions around the "Spina," endeavored to obtain the rear.

All the other drivers displayed a like reserve; experienced sportsmen, they managed their horses and attempted only to preserve their position and relative distance, knowing that the real interest of the games did not commence until the three last turns, during which a skillful charioteer could assure himself of the victory.

Then, at the very instant they all started a fourth time

for the "metæ," Edax, with one bound of his white mares, darted before Victoriosus and Cares, who were nearer the "Spina," and thus gained the first place.

The unknown, quietly retaining his position, remained behind.

Meanwhile, all the Circus, carried away by enthusiasm, trembled with applause, and covered with imprecations Cnæus Furius Nomentanus, who was seen waving his menacing hands in space and cursing Victoriosus.

At the sixth turn Victoriosus, without recovering his lost position, nevertheless gained upon Edax two thirds of the length, as we say at present, thus proving either that Edax had not tried the utmost swiftness of his horses or that Cnæus Furius Nomentanus was unjustly enraged against Victoriosus.

Towards the end of the sixth turn there was accomplished one of those feats that for many years had not been witnessed in the Circus Maximus, and the memory of which will never be lost in the sands that have effaced every vestige of that long celebrated arena. Some seconds before the whirlwind of "quadrigæ" passed, like a storm-driven cloud, before the seat of honor occupied by Cnæus Furius Nomentanus, the unknown, who hitherto had ranked next to Cares, was heard to give that low, shrill whistle which suddenly carried his bounding horses a chariot's length ahead of Victoriosus; at the same time, tightening the reins with his left hand, the docile animals stopped that instant, almost falling back upon themselves, completely staggered by the shock of their terrible effort. Then precipitated into this narrow space by the impulse of his own course, the chariot of Victoriosus, striking violently against the immovable wheel of the unknown charioteer's "quadriga," was broken and overturned, the unhappy driver, bloody and fainting, pitched twenty feet in the dust.

Then was heard from Cnæus Furius Nomentanus a cry of rage piercing the clamor of these hundred thousand voices, that could agitate, like an impetuous wind, the immense "velarium" stretched over the arena.

Nevertheless, Edax had profited by this moment, and understanding the danger with which the horses of Pluto

menaced him in turn, he made his four white mares almost fly through space, their feet scarcely touching the ground.

He had just turned the "metæ" a sixth time—could he retain the advantage a little longer, victory was his.

Quick as lightning, the unknown measured the distance at a glance, and, again uttering that peculiar whistle, resumed the guidance of his horses.

In ten bounds he was on a line with Edax; two seconds after he was certain of victory, for there now remained but one side of the "Spina."

Seizing his whip, whose leathern thongs waving above his head devoured the air with a creaking noise, the unknown threw off his mask, and when like an arrow he flew past the seat of honor occupied by Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus, the latter suddenly fell back exhaling a coarse cry of sorrow and fright.

In the unknown, whose whip had just marked the livid visage of Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus with a bloody stroke, the terrified freedman had recognized his former master, Aulus Plautius Lateranus!

* * * * * * * * * *

That evening, in the house of the Salarian way, the young man said to his mother and sister:

"It is accomplished! I appear no more at the Circus."

"What! Aulus, have you become a charioteer?"

"But, dear mother, other noble patricians have mounted their chariots without dishonor. Besides, it was necessary!"

"It was necessary!"

"Yes, dear sister, it was necessary to publicly chastise the knave who fleeced me, and dared to say he would marry you!"

"Me?"

"You!"

"And these horses, whose are they?" asked Aula Plautia Laterana.

"They belong to a certain Sotades, who—"

"Sotades!" eagerly exclaimed the two women at once; "And who is this man?"

"I do not know, for I have not seen him, but he knew, I cannot tell how, the place of my retreat, where, from time to time, he sent me secret advice. From him I learned the

machinations of Furius for my ruin, and his miserable designs upon you, Aula. Some months before the races which have just taken place, this Sotades proposed to a person, on whose estate (adjoining the ancient dominions of my father) I had found an asylum, an enormous price for the four horses with which I have just gained a triumph in the Circus Maximus. I, myself, prevailed upon my friend to accept the offer. Imagine my astonishment when this same Sotades wrote to inform me that these horses, whose incomparable swiftness I had often tested, were mine, having been bought expressly for me. 'We suppose,' added this mysterious letter, the exact terms of which I quote, 'we suppose that Aulus Plautius Lateranus will not refuse to guide these horses himself at the Circus Maximus, where Furius prepares, with others of his class, a grand chariot race, and flatters himself that he shall vanquish all competitors. This will afford Aulus Plautius Lateranus the favorable opportunity of an honorable and triumphant return to Rome, and of publicly confounding Furius, who, after ruining the master, dares aspire to the hand of that master's sister. Aulus Plautius Lateranus can rest assured that the day is not far distant when he shall resume possession of the estate adjudged to Furius, and wipe away the disgrace this wretch has tried to stamp upon the name of Lateran. Soon will Aulus Plautius Lateranus become very rich, more so than he has ever been. Meanwhile, the ancient banker, Ctesiphon, is charged to remit him whatever sums of money (no matter how considerable the amount) he may desire.'"

"Ctesiphon!" cried Plautia, "but this man was your creditor, and with Furius contributed to your ruin!"

"It appears not, dear mother. The secret information of which I have spoken informs me that Ctesiphon was but the name-lender of Furius, to whom alone is to be attributed the consummation of my disaster. Ctesiphon, in all this, protests to have been only the dupe of Furius."

"It is, indeed, what Lactorium said," murmured Aula.

"Lactorium!"

In repeating this name, suddenly pronounced before him, a deep blush suffused the young man's countenance, and he remained pensive for some instants.

"I understand nothing of this letter, nor of the singular

incidents referred to therein," he resumed, in a few minutes, addressing his mother and sister. "Certainly, I accept neither the horses of this Sotades, nor the silver of Ctesiphon; but I have re-entered Rome with honor, and shall exile myself no more. Do not regret my having driven a chariot; the chastisement I inflicted has washed away my injuries, and the triumph won gained me the applause of all my friends. The only part of this letter I credit is, that my past has been a bad dream which is beginning to fade away!"

And, having uttered these words, Aulus Plautia Lateranus, not wishing to expose himself to the reproaches, so justly due from his mother and sister, arose and left the house.

The mother looked at her daughter, and the daughter returned her mother's anxious glance, each inquiring, by this mute interrogation, if they had, indeed, recovered Aulus.

CHAPTER III.

WHERE TWO OF THE THREE GRACES APPEAR.

THIS Ctesiphon, the ancient "mensarius," was truly a personage very original and interesting to study.

Since dissolving his association with Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus, he had led at Rome what we call in Paris the life of a "bon bourgeois," all the marks of which were visible in his appearance. In the morning, he was nearly always seen leisurely mounting the "monte Pincio" gardens, in order to there obtain his supply of fresh air, which he certainly breathed at ease, with full and vigorous lungs. From this elevated point, he enjoyed an extensive view of the Field of Mars, and in promenading, as one does who has nothing else to do, he failed not to notice attentively the slightest particulars of all that was passing around him.

"Look at that young fool Gratianus, trying this morning to break his neck!" said he, for example, regarding from afar a cavalier spurring his horse, and running at full speed from the side of the Tiberian field in a straight line towards the river, as though he intended to plunge himself and horse

beneath its waves. "It is singular," added he, in a philosophical manner of reflection, "that those who are on the road to ruin always outstrip others, who, under no circumstances are able to follow their footsteps!"

"If any one had told me," murmured Ctesiphon, a moment after, on perceiving a group of three persons beginning to appear on the Field of Mars, "if any one had told me two years ago, when we had neighboring counters at the Forum, that this Ursidius would ever be offering sacrifices to the gods! And yet, in a studied attitude, he advances along the Triumphal way, with the sacrificer Liberius, 'asinus asinum fricat,'* and followed by a slave who bears the sheep, innocent victim to be immolated. Where are they going? Ah! very well, to the Pantheon. Indeed, it is not too much for all Olympus to support a worm-eaten table, that may raise the credit of a man not able to borrow the value of the lean animal, whose blood, though in vain, will smoke on the altars."

Ctesiphon never forgot to stop a few moments at the most convenient place of observation commanded by the hill of the Gardens, scrupulously examining a certain point of the vast plain; and this examination ended, he resumed his walk, ordinarily saying:

"Always the same activity in the pawnbroker's establishment of Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus!" Ctesiphon emphasized each of these words with marked irony. "Always the same excited crowds in the four roads to this 'isle!'† Always men who want money and find it to their satisfaction, pledging objects concealed under their tunics. One is not seen at this hour except by those like himself Every one does not love, as much as I do, to be in advance of Aurora, the rosy-fingered goddess, who opens the doors of the east, as Homer says, the most divine of all poets."

After this view of the "isle" of Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus, Ctesiphon generally stopped his observations to descend the hill and re-enter his dwelling, situated—we know not precisely in what quarter, for one of the singular fantasies of this enigmatic person was to have no fixed lodging, but to pass his days and nights sometimes in one, some-

*Proverb: Who resemble, assemble.
†Insula, a house standing alone.

times in another of the numerous habitations he owned, here and there, throughout Rome. The salutary fatigue of this morning walk, no matter where he went to seek repose, had opened his heart to the special enjoyment of beautiful poetry, and any one who, at this moment, could have surprised him in the solitude he had chosen, would have invariably found him reading, for the hundredth time, perhaps, the unrolled volume of one of his three favorite authors, Homer, Pindar, Anacreon. Reading occupied his time agreeably until noon, and sometimes later.

In yielding to the pleasures of repose, he would say, "a mid-day nap reposes the soul, on awaking we are so much refreshed, that evening appears no more than the morning of another day."

After the nap came the bath which Ctesiphon never omitted. It was that of a little old man slightly past sixty, well preserved, somewhat fleshy and short legged, but fresh and active, with color in his cleanly shaven cheeks, and a plumpness which was not increasing nor unbecoming.

When speaking of this custom dear to all Romans, he would say, "bathing is a preservative; it is to the body what sleep is to the soul; it renders the limbs flexible and gives them strength. The Muses have always loved the Naiads."

Ctesiphon always chose the warm baths of Titus, because of their being situated near the Forum, where he loved to show himself at the liveliest business hours, which commenced everywhere in Rome just as the citizens, refreshed and invigorated, returned from the public baths.

Ctesiphon had retired from business, but he lived much (another failing of poetic souls) in reminiscences and the past. Consequently, neither the sharp-sounding strokes on the wooden tablets of the "nummularii," nor the jingle of silver displeased him; and as of old, he was still interested in watching the play of features. Moreover, being well known at the Forum, he always found some one with whom to converse, and even hazarded advice to the young "argentarii," which they candidly admitted there would be profit in following. As to the elder bankers, his contemporaries, they smiled as formerly when Ctesiphon passed near them, in so much, that on a certain day, a "mensarius," address-

ing the "magister de auctio," or officer who presides at the sale of delinquent debtors' goods, said to him: "See here! this fat Ctesiphon, is he rich or not? What is your opinion on this point which no one has ever been able to discover?"

"I had a 'præco,'"* gravely answered the officer "(and, by Hercules! I much regret that I no longer have him!) who, under all ordinary circumstances, was able to make himself heard above the bidder's noise. If the tumult increased, the "præco's" voice also increased so as to be heard on all sides—were the sounds deafening, my "præco" strained his throat a little more, and always mounted above the most furious bursts of clamor. On one occasion at the Forum, during a very unpopular and offensive forced sale, there was such a storm of clamors, that by the Money God! I should truly not have known to whom to listen, if I had not been reassured by the voice of my "præco" who repeated the offers, and repeated them as distinctly as though no one around him had spoken in louder tones than usual. And mark, dear Lupicinus, that the "præco" was not tried to his utmost, as he informed me the same memorable evening. Now, it is the same you understand of Ctesiphon in other matters. I have seen him give little to those who required little, more to those who demanded more, much when it was necessary, e-nor-mous-ly in cases where any other man would have been entirely bewildered. No one knows better than our dear Lupicinus the capacity of that large jar standing in his cellar; suppose it would be agreeable to him to have it filled with gold—I speak of the best quality—Ctesiphon would not hesitate, I believe, to give him that satisfaction—he would only inquire whether the jar was free from flaws, for he is a man who loves solid vases, and who thinks (perhaps he is not wrong) that gold escapes through flaws more readily than wine."

The "magister," in his position, obliging him to act between debtors pursued and creditors pursuing, was justly supposed to possess great knowledge of the strength and weakness of many persons. Consequently, Lupicinus, after receiving this answer, smiled no more at the approach of Ctesiphon, but, on the contrary, desirous of rendering to

*Public crier.

money the honor which is its due, he went out before the "mensarius" as soon as that personage appeared in sight, and saluted him respectfully, bending low to the ground.

Ctesiphon had his little occupations for the evening, as well as for the morning and middle of the day. Thus, there were three things he never, or, at least, very rarely failed to do, and which he appeared to hold equally at heart, so careful was he in their exact accomplishment.

The first, in going out of the Forum, was to pass along the Nomentanian way until he reached a place from which, with ease and certainty, he could observe all that was passing around the dwelling of Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus, precisely as, in the morning, he had examined from the top of the hill, those who came and went about the pawn-broking establishment.

The second thing Ctesiphon did, after well noting whatever he wished to learn from thus carefully studying the surroundings of this patrician dwelling, now inhabited by his little Lupus of former times (and this minute survey always consumed more or less time), was to go not far from thence to a house of miserable aspect. Ascending every flight of stairs to the highest, he found himself facing a large solid door, and stopped an instant behind it to hear what was passing in the room beyond. A noise like that of convulsive movements, accompanied by a strange giggling, reached his ear.

Ctesiphon then took from under his tunic a key of peculiar form, opened the door, and entered.

When the fat mensarius descended the stairs of this poverty-stricken house, night had completely set in, and it was only by carefully and tediously groping his way, that he succeeded in reaching the public street. Any one who, at this moment, had examined his countenance by the light of those night lanterns which, according to Ammianus Marcellinus, illuminated the streets of Rome with a brilliancy rivaling that of day,* would have been singularly struck at the indications of violent feeling which had replaced the usual expression of his pleasant countenance. Incommoded, no doubt, by the sudden glare succeeding the

*Et hæc agebat in urbe, ubi pernoctantium luminum claritudo dierum solet imitari fulgorem. Lib. XIV, cap. 1.

obscurity from which he emerged, Ctesiphon kept close to the walls, and endeavored to remain as much as possible in the shade. Then directing his steps towards the Salarian way, and taking every precaution, doubtless, in order to avoid discovery, he settled himself immediately facing the front door of the dwelling occupied by Aula Plautia Laterana, and there remained a long time perfectly immovable; sorrowful sighs agitated his breast, broken exclamations passed his lips, and sobs, whilst he constantly uttered these words:

"Poor woman! has she not suffered enough?"

Then Ctesiphon wept bitterly.

Finally, moving away with reluctance, and walking very slowly, he regained the spot in which he had resolved to spend the remainder of the night.

Early next morning, he was seen taking the road to the hill of the Gardens, and his day, begun like the preceding, was invariably finished the same, or nearly so, filled with the preoccupation of evolutions, as mysterious as they were regular, and the secret of which remains for us to penetrate.

To do this, we must proceed with order and first take Ctesiphon by surprise, on a certain day when, having passed around the Forum as usual, he was stationed at his post of observation near the patrician dwelling of Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus.

This day was precisely the third after that on which the new patrician had been defeated in the sports of the Circus Maximus, and his face so outrageously marked by a vigorous stroke of the whip from his former master, Aulus Plautius Lateranus.

The parvenu, furious at his disgrace, crushed by his defeat, still trembling with impotent rage, buried himself in the deepest recesses of the most secret rooms in his dwelling; there sullenly brooding over the hootings and jokes which had followed his injury, and the applauses bestowed upon him who had inflicted it, he employed his time in devising means of revenge. All was silent around this house which, it was said, had been consigned to public reprobation, and covered with the ignominy enveloping its master. This silence was not displeasing to Ctesiphon, who seemed in excellent spirits, though all eyes and ears as if expecting something new which would soon appear.

The looked-for object was the appearance, in the Nomentanian way, of a person (whom Ctesiphon, from his station, immediately perceived and recognized) evidently directing his steps towards the dwelling of Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus.

"Here we are!" said Ctesiphon, in an under tone. And he immediately left his retreat to join the few passers-by at this time in the Nomentanian way, and to take the end of the street, opposite that by which the unknown advanced, so as to meet at a certain point which the fat "mensarius" had been able to determine beforehand.

This manœuvre was a perfect success, the unknown being utterly unsuspicious of it, and, moreover, absorbed in reflection, apparently too deep to admit of his bestowing attention upon so insignificant an incident.

"Good morning, Carpinatius!"

"Good morning, Ctesiphon!" said Carpinatius, unable to repress a start of surprise at this unexpected salutation, but promptly resuming his usual calmness.

"I thought you were at Syracuse," said Ctesiphon.

"And I thought you in Thrace, that country where you were to finish your existence."

"Indeed, dear Carpinatius!"

"Indeed, dear Ctesiphon!"

"Let us pay a visit to Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus."

"As you say."

"Our little disputes in settling our affairs have left no traces?"

"Not the slightest—besides we always remember our friends in their afflictions."

"In affliction! has Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus then been unfortunate?"

Carpinatius regarded Ctesiphon with a peculiar expression, and, without answering his question, said:

"Dear Ctesiphon, this place does not appear to me exactly suitable for a free and lengthy discussion. If you are willing, we will go elsewhere to continue it. What I have to say to Furius, or what transactions I have with him, will depend somewhat on what we say and do together."

"As you please, dear Carpinatius. I have on this side, not far from here, a house which I cannot rent because it is very much out of repair. I had just been there when I had

the good luck to meet you. Shall we return and finish our conversation?"

"Come on," said Carpinatius.

And the two old colleagues of Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus passed before the door of his abode, on their way to the house in which were heard the strange noises we have mentioned, and whose dark stairs Ctesiphon ascended nearly every evening.

But the ground floor, to which Carpinatius was admitted, being at a great distance from the sixth story whence proceeded these noises, naught was heard to break the profound silence of this carefully fastened apartment, where the two speakers now found themselves.

CHAPTER IV.

AN INTERESTING INTERVIEW.

WHEN these two men, who had been so long instrumental in establishing the fortune of Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus, and who were fully acquainted with the minutest details of its immensity, seated themselves, face to face, on the two seats which were the sole contents of this denuded, dilapidated house, Carpinatius began to look around him in a manner clearly denoting undoubted astonishment, at least, if not distrust.

Ctesiphon allowed him to continue the survey, and then suddenly burst out in a roar of laughter, saying:

"The dear Carpinatius! He thought I was rich, and sees that I am poor!"

"It is not here that you reside, Ctesiphon?" inquired Carpinatius, who, having finished his examination of the house, was now regarding its proprietor with the same expression of surprise.

"No, certainly, I do not reside here," hastily replied Ctesiphon, "but I have just informed you I can get nothing from this house on account of its miserable condition, which fact seems to imply that my fortune does not admit of my having the necessary repairs made, for you can well judge that, otherwise, I would not fail to make them."

Carpinatius pressed his thin lips together, doubtless, to conceal a smile, and merely shrugging his shoulders as a faint expression of his incredulity, said, quickly:

"See now, Ctesiphon, we must not lose time in such pleasantries!—let us begin business—our interests are one."

"My interest is to itself, dear Carpinatius.

"Is that your final decision?"

"Yes, dear Carpinatius."

"Well, I, on my part, will act alone."

"I shall not object to that—you have done so already, have you succeeded?"

"And you?"

"Oh! I can afford to wait, and do wait!"

"I shall have, hereafter, dear Ctesiphon, a rude auxiliary, and believe it my duty to caution you."

"Indeed! Do you know, dear Carpinatius, the thought which occurs to me this moment?"

"I never had any taste for enigmas."

"Ah, well! I think it was wrong not to put on each side of Plutus, the Money God, whom we see represented in his temples as a blind, lame, and winged old man holding a purse in his hands, the statues of two goddesses, one of which should be Cupidity, and the other——"

"And the other?"

"Cupidity, that is you, dear Carpinatius; the other is myself—therefore, you see why I do not name the second goddess."

"Very well, dear Ctesiphon. Without doubt this signifies that, in wishing to secure the treasures of Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus, you yourself have a motive which a generous soul would not disown, whilst I would be actuated by the wretched suggestions of rapacity!"

"Dear Carpinatius, I never make myself a judge of motives. I seek but to learn the true state of the case—so what I have just said signifies simply that you are actuated by a cause, and for an object, in neither of which would I be willing to participate; consequently, there can be no unity of interests between us two, as you proposed awhile ago."

"Then we will talk of other matters. Have you not heard that I am now in high favor?"

"With whom?"

"Dear Ctesiphon, allow me to say no more about it at present."

"Very well, dear Carpinatius, each has his reasons for speaking or being silent, and I shall not find fault with your silence—no doubt it concerns the rude auxiliary you mentioned a few minutes ago. But will not the portion reverting to him be greater than that you would expect me to require? I do not know but what I am mistaken, still I cannot help thinking that an alliance between us two would be infinitely more advantageous to you."

"That may be, but with him of whom I speak, there is no need of a third person to insure success, whilst as to you——"

"As to me?"

"It is not enough, dear Ctesiphon, that you hold a claim on this Thracian domain, of which Cnæus Furius Nomentanus would be but a native serf—you must yet furnish the original proofs which alone can give you possession of his person, and, consequently, of all that he owns. Now this cannot be accomplished without the presence first, and then the aid of three inaccessible persons, whom you have long sought, and whom you will, probably, never find."

"Name them."

"Do you not think, dear Ctesiphon, that I have well employed my time since the day we supped together with Furius. I then had only vague suspicions of certain circumstances, concerning which I have made inquiries, and have discovered——"

"Well, name these three persons."

"Sotades, Selene, and Chærestrate!"

Ctesiphon, on hearing these three names that Carpinatius had held in reserve as a stunning revelation, which could not fail of bringing the ancient "mensarius" to terms of capitulation, exhibited no signs, either of that surprise or emotion the speaker had evidently expected. On the contrary, falling back in his seat, and raising his eyes to the joists of the wretched room, throughout which a profound silence continued to reign, he finished by a burst of laughter, longer and more derisive than that with which he had begun the interview.

Carpinatius, though much astonished at the little effect

produced on Ctesiphon by the sudden mention of these three names, did not, however, testify anything of this astonishment or irritation, excited by the scoffing hilarity in which the fat "mensarius" seemed to take pleasure. Carpinatius appeared to have other ways of revenge, and to be but patiently awaiting the occasion to present itself.

"The dear Carpinatius! how he has discovered all my little secrets!" finally said the old "mensarius," immediately resuming his serious tone. "You are not mistaken. Sotades, Selene, and Chaerestrate, these are the three persons whose co-operation, and above all, whose presence I must have."

"Well?"

"Well, our dear Carpinatius is not ignorant of the fact, that already one of them has returned, otherwise, I would not have explained so fully the motive inducing him to make the proposal of sharing with me, and for which he showed just now a great anxiety."

"Returned? really, dear Ctesiphon, I do not understand you."

"By Apollo and the Muses! This seems to me a little too strong! Do you not understand me?"

"No, Ctesiphon. I declare I know nothing of what you mean."

"It appears to me, however, that I was not mistaken when three days ago, at the plays of the Circus, I distinctly recognized our dear Carpinatius, who was not far from the seat of honor occupied by Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus, and even received that individual in his arms, after the ignominious stroke of the whip."

"Certainly, I shall not deny it. But what connection has that with this matter?"

"It has this connection, that on all sides—and you, dear Carpinatius, must also have heard it—they said in the Circus Maximus—let me see, what did they say?—aid me a little, dear Carpinatius."

But the latter was careful to avoid answering this question, made in that tone of strange and annoying irony, with which the fat "mensarius" continued to season his discourse.

"Well," resumed Ctesiphon, who saw that Carpinatius liked much better to listen than to hazard even the least

word, "they said three things in the Circus Maximus—first, that a man named Sotades organized a cabal against Furius, which, in order to render him ridiculous beforehand, had pursued him during the first two days of the games, with sarcasms and other signs of dislike still more offensive—secondly, that this same Sotades furnished Aulus Plautius Lateranus with those famous horses of Pluto, by which the driver Victoriosus was so cleverly knocked out of his chariot—thirdly, that this same Sotades inspired the mind of Aulus Plautius Lateranus with the determination of publicly chastising the audacity of his former slave who dared aspire to the hand of his master's sister, which determination we know he carried into effect by cutting Furius a blow across his face with a whip, just at the moment our parvenu expected to triumph. Dear Carpinatius, is not this, indeed, what was circulated, from bench to bench, in the Circus Maximus?"

He to whom this question was put could not refrain from murmuring, "Yes."

"Well," continued Ctesiphon, "you see, dear Carpinatius, what I mean by saying one has returned. If this Sotades has really instigated the aforesaid occurrences, it is evident to me that he must either be in Rome or not far off, and can appear at the proper moment. What do you think of it?"

"It remains to be seen whether the Sotades spoken of at the Circus is the man you seek."

"Beyond doubt, it is still but a vague probability. However, if this Sotades of the Circus be a different person from him of whom we were both speaking, why would he have directed all his intelligent solicitude and secret efforts so particularly against Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus, as if the moment were approaching when this son of a serf woman would descend to the station in which he was born? How does it appear to you?"

"Add also to this, dear Carpinatius," continued Ctesiphon, seeing his listener would give no answer, "add to this, that Sotades has not lost sight of Selene and Chaerestrate, and thus you will perceive that after having, as you say, searched a very long time, I have suddenly at my service these three persons whose concurrence and presence

will be indispensable, and the memory of whom, believe me, amidst the reminiscences of childhood has, more than once troubled the prosperity of Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus. Answer me now, when I ask you a third time, what is your opinion of the conjectures I have formed?"

But Carpinatius had, doubtless, concluded to listen and reflect, instead of talking, for, despite the vivacity of the question, he thought proper to give no answer, but remained plunged in the almost unbroken silence he had so resolutely maintained since Ctesiphon pronounced the name of Sotades. One could have said that this man, accustomed to the management of business affairs requiring him to trace the connection between known facts, and vague, uncertain ones, was pondering, at this moment, an idea which suddenly presented itself, and calculating the reasons inducing him to admit or reject it entirely. On seeing himself the object of a scrutinizing look, whose intensity would, perhaps, have annoyed any other than himself, the "mensarius" was very near falling into another fit of that hilarity which he had so freely indulged since the commencement of the interview; but fearful, no doubt, of going too far, he restrained his laughter, and merely repeated, in a tone of raillery, a few words of his companion:

"I can, indeed, perceive, dear Carpinatius, that you have not wasted your time during the eighteen months which have elapsed since the supper at which you drank with Furius the toast to permanent Liberty and increasing Fortune. But it is not enough to know the names—you must discover what is called the knot in each transaction, and if you now seek it in the manner it appears to me you do, rest assured you will not be successful."

At these words, Carpinatius rose from his seat, as though wishing to discontinue an unpleasant conversation, and prepared to leave.

On his part, Ctesiphon did the same.

Carpinatius was just stepping over the door-sill into the street, when his companion stopped him by a light touch, and said, in the same tone of raillery:

"So now, dear Carpinatius, it is well understood that you are free, perfectly free to act alone, and to acquaint Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus with the communications you

had intended submitting to him, when a happy chance threw me in your way. As I think of it, how comes on his project of a union with the proud Aula? It appears to me he is somewhat dilatory in keeping his promise, assuring us he would marry her in less than a year. May I ask if you know anything on this point?"

"No," replied Carpinatius, "I know nothing, at least, positively. I believe, however," added he, deciding to throw off the reserve he had worn until this moment, and affecting a certain air which Ctesiphon began to perceive, "I believe his plans will soon be settled definitely. and, no doubt, it will be at Sirmium——"*

"At Sirmium!" exclaimed Ctesiphon, "It is now my turn, dear Carpinatius, to assure you that I understand nothing at all of what you say!"

"Did we not mention only two things but a moment ago? First, that Furius is at present in deep affliction; secondly, that I proposed giving you a powerful auxiliary?"

"Whose name you have resolved not to tell?"

"Yes, but upon reflection I believe I may let you hear it."

"He is called——"

"The Emperor Galerius Valerius Maximianus!"

At this name, Ctesiphon could not forbear an exclamation. "Ah!"

"So, you begin to understand. It is really the simplest thing in the world. At this moment, Furius would like to leave Rome, where, as you yourself have just told me, this Sotades has made him very uneasy. I then, in the first place, advised a little trip to Sirmium, because, in my mind, there is nothing like putting five or six hundred miles between oneself and the place which displeases us. Then Furius thirsts for revenge; therefore, I told him that Sirmium was exactly the place where he would find Galerius, who, of all men, understands vengeance the best, and can most readily furnish the means of making it overwhelming and terrible. Now, dear Ctesiphon, do you not see that by going to Sirmium, and diverting his mind from his disgraceful defeat, and the thought of punishing Sotades, Furius can give his attention to the third matter which you just now recalled?"

*Sirmium, the capital of Pannonia, where the Emperor Galerius had established the seat of his particular government.

And without waiting for Ctesiphon's reply, Carpinatius, probably satisfied with the retaliation he had inflicted, in filling, or trying to fill, with alarm the mind of his accomplice, left the house in which this interview had taken place, and the importance of which will shortly be apparent.

The big "mensarius," left to himself, remained for some moments in silent reflection.

Evidently he was deeply absorbed.

Was it the approaching departure of Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus, which, destroying Ctesiphon's plans, had obliged him to devise new ones, and guard against these formidable combinations? Or, was it only the name of Galerius (whose favor and assistance Furius expected to obtain at Sirmium) that weighed so heavily in the thoughts suddenly assailing our banker's mind? Doubtless, the future events of this recital will answer these questions we have just proposed.

However it may be, and whatever the cause of that visible anxiety pressing upon him, he had resolved on the only course practicable at present—which was to follow the example of Carpinatius, in leaving this dilapidated house where (the reader has not forgotten it) he did not reside.

It is, perhaps, equally useless to state, that in quitting the house he did not fail to carefully fasten the entrance door, which was furnished with strong bolts, a precaution apparently superfluous for a dwelling in which he did not live, the age and ruined condition of which, moreover, would have been sufficient protection from all outside intrusion, as none would even think of crossing a threshold separating them from bare stones and cracked walls.

Then, having done this, and being a very methodical man, this old "mensarius," Ctesiphon, who did not easily vary his habits, directed his steps along the Salarian way, and took his usual position facing the dwelling of Aula Plautia Laterana, where he buried himself anew in the reflections beginning to absorb his attention at the close of the interview with Carpinatius. However, this evening he deviated a little from the ordinary routine, and, before proceeding to his present station, had omitted his daily feat of ascending to the sixth story of the ruined house, and opening the door of the room situated at the top of these dark stairs. Consequently, his countenance lacked that gloomy

expression which always overcast every feature when he reached the street after this mysterious proceeding.

It must also be noted that no sorrowful groans escaped his breast; neither from his lips those exclamations of compassion (addressed to the unknown woman whose very name he seemed afraid to breathe), nor those abundant tears flowing down his cheeks, as he stationed himself at his post of observation, and fixed his eyes immovably upon the house of the Salarian way. No, at this moment Ctesiphon appears simply in the calm attitude of a person pre-occupied, and who communes with himself on the cause of that pre-occupation. So deeply is he absorbed, that he fails to perceive an individual examining the Salarian way by the light of the public lanterns, and apparently in search of a dwelling unknown to him, but which it seems important that he should discover.

This person, at last spying Ctesiphon stationed in his corner, advanced towards him, saying:

"My brother, is it not here that a noble matron, named Aula Plautia Laterana, dwells?"

The "mensarius," thus disturbed in his reflections, cast one look, one single glance, at the person whose hand still pointed to the house, and, immediately seized with so convulsive a tremor that he was unable to articulate a single word, the "yes" arising to his lips never parting them, he suddenly, to the stranger's great astonishment, stepped out of his retreat, and, without answering, made his way off as quickly as his short legs and corpulence would permit, and almost instantly disappeared in the darkness.

Whilst running, however, he was heard to utter an exclamation which, notwithstanding his strange fright, at last forced its way out of his momentarily paralyzed mouth; and this exclamation was a word he continually repeated like some one seized with a sudden delirium:

"The other! the other! the other!"

Such was the cry that, amid Ctesiphon's flight, resounded incessantly, striking the sleeping echoes of the night, and causing the stranger to wonder if he had not addressed some unfortunate lunatic.

Though so rapid his flight, we could conveniently follow him and learn where he finally stopped, but it behooves us first to tell who this stranger was, whence he came, and why he sought the dwelling of Aula Plautia Laterana.

CHAPTER V.

RETURN TO ROME.

SOME hours before the appearance of this stranger in the Salarian way, that is, at the moment when Ctesiphon, according to his daily custom, was still in the Forum moving around among the brokers' stands, a traveler, evidently worn out with fatigue, and dressed almost like a slave, his poor tunic covered with the dust of a long route, his brow wet with perspiration, had just seated himself in the shade of the large pines belonging to the villa of Caesonius Severus, situated on that very peak that for a long time had borne the name of Mount Vatican, and from which arises, at the present day, the Papal palace.

This traveler, starting from the East, had landed at Brindusium about a month previous. Immediately on arriving at that port, he had set out for Rome, taking the Appian way, styled, not improperly, "the queen of long roads;" and he had traveled alone, and on foot, the three hundred and eighty miles, never once stopping, except when his exhausted strength forbade the further continuance of his daily walk.

Reaching, at last, the Capena Gate which terminated the Appian way, the traveler, having received some instructions, turned to his left and followed the "pomærium" * clear to the angle formed by the ancient house of Petronius † still standing behind the walls of the City, whose towers, rising at various intervals, were here interrupted by the river's course.

There being no bridge over the Tiber at this point, the stranger crossed in a boat proffered by one of the numerous watermen always at the service of those residing beyond the river—thence cutting diagonally by the Vitellian and Portuensian ways he had, on reaching the other side, arrived at the great Aurelian way, ending at the Aurelian gate, from which the Triumphal bridge was immediately accessible.

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* A large circular path formerly marking the limits of Rome, but now become a girdle between the city walls and its numerous suburban quarters.

†Celebrated poet in the reign of Nero, author of the Satyricon, and a poem on the Civil War.

By thus following the "pomærium" our traveler, already fatigued from his long day's journey, was compelled to traverse at least one-half the outer boundaries of Rome, and this certainly was not the shortest route from the Capena Gate to the Salarian way, his ultimate direction as evidently denoted by his first enquiries. But in gaining the Salarian way by the shortest route, it was necessary to cross Rome in its entire width, threading the labyrinth of isles or isolated houses, each of which must be examined with the greatest care at the almost certain risk of altogether losing the way; moreover, he would have had to encounter the inextricable windings of the alleys, in a quarter long celebrated for the wretched appearance of its dilapidated buildings piled up one against another between the opposite declivities of the Viminal and Quirinal hills; in a word, it involved exposure to continual mistakes, which the stranger appeared to dread, having never been in Rome, or if so, retaining but a vague recollection of it.

On the contrary, by following the "pomærium" he was sure to avoid mistakes, for it led directly to the Salarian Gate close by the road of the same name. In keeping along this road, about half a mile farther, he would reach the Collina Gate opening on the Nomentanian way, parallel to the Salarian, of which, since the occasion offers, it is not useless to make known the exact situation, being to the north of Rome in the most anciently constructed of the suburban quarters. Yet, however earnest the traveler's desire to avoid, as much as possible, the embarrassments of Rome and the difficulties of its public thoroughfares, it is probable that this motive alone would not have sufficed turning him so much out of his true road, had he not, before making inquiries about the Salarian way, asked, with particular and marked anxiety, where the Janiculum and Vatican fields were situated, and what direction he should take to arrive there without too much loss of time.

Those whom the unknown addressed, not doubting him to be a resident of the neighboring country hastening to consult the Vatican oracle as to the signification of his newborn infant's cries,* accompanied the desired information

*Aulus Gellius (Libr. XVI, cap. 17) pretends, indeed, that the Vatican god inspired new-born babes, and was consulted as to the signification of their first cries, which the Romans supposed foretold their

with all those felicitations and wishes of good fortune that well meaning persons are accustomed to bestow upon parents in such cases.

The unknown, having descended the Janiculum, arrived at the Vatican field, but instead of stopping to consult the oracle whose temple stood before him, he cast upon it, in passing by, a most disdainful look, and continued his journey until he found himself at that part of the field where arose the opulent villas of P. Bibulus and the freedman, M. Calvidienus. There, drawing from the pocket of his tunic a leaf of papyrus, containing a sort of roughly drawn plan, he consulted it with the greatest attention, at the same time very carefully examining all the surrounding places. This examination finished, he made a few steps in front of the villa of P. Bibulus, probing the ground with his staff, and permitting not the least object to escape the scrutiny of his gaze ardently fixed upon the soil.

All at once, instead of sinking into the ground, the iron point of his staff slipped, making a dull sound, as though it encountered the smooth surface of a rock level with the earth. It was then the unknown, trembling and falling on his knees, pushed rapidly away the long branches of tall herbage obstructing his view of what he had sought with so much solicitude, and which immediately appeared before his eyes already wet with tears.

This was a long, wide tombstone composed of a single block of greyish travertin, on which was rudely sculptured in relief a reversed cross, and at the base of this cross a name: PETRVS.*

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destiny and fortune in this life. Varro, cited by St. Augustin, who is of the same opinion (de Civit. del, 4, 8, 11 et 20), considered, on the contrary, the Vatican god as the first teacher of human language, although the syllable Va, to which were afterwards added gire, gitus (vagire, vagitus), is the one uttered by all men at their entrance into life. Festus (V° Vaticanus) says simply that Mount Vatican was thus named because the Romans captured it from the Etruscans after a "vaticinatio" or oracle had foretold the victory.

*It is said that St. Peter, crucified with his head down, on Mount Janiculum, was afterwards, by the care of the priest Marcellus, buried with touching honors in the Vatican field. (Tertullian, de Præscript., cap. 36; adv. Marc., Lib. IV, cap. 5; contr. Gnost. Scorp. cap. 15;)—Denis, bishop of Carthage, cited by Eusebius (Lib. II, cap. 25); Caius, contemporary with Tertullian, cited by the same Eusebius in the same passage.—St. Peter's body remained in the place where it had been buried until only a few years before the last persecution, when it was removed to the catacombs, in order to elude

The unknown, kissing the cross and the name engraven on the stone, let fall beside him his staff, and, holding his arms extended in the air, stood in profound meditation like one in an ecstasy, during which no other movements could be observed than those of his eyes, alternately lifted up and cast down, sometimes as if contemplating the tomb on which his bare knees rested, and sometimes as if seeking to penetrate the immensity of the celestial vault.

The noise (though distant) of a goatherd returning from a neighboring villa with his flock, drew the stranger from the deep reverie in which, but for the circumstance, he would have remained much longer. Quickly restoring the thick herbage he had removed from this sacred tomb, and assuring himself that all exterior marks of it had entirely disappeared, he resumed his staff and began walking in the direction of Mount Vatican.

But the first steps convinced him that he had presumed too much on his strength, and that, exhausted by his last efforts, it would probably be impossible to finish the journey which must yet be made in order to reach the Salarian way.

The goatherd now came to his side. Struck with the stranger's pallid countenance, and rightly supposing that his momentary weakness was attributable to extreme fatigue, this man detached from his own girdle a large wooden vase, and, without pronouncing a word, began milking one of his flock which, like its master, had stopped to fix its large, astonished eyes on the exhausted traveler. When the vase was full to the brim, the herdsman presented it to the unknown, saying:

"Drink! I am owner of the flock and need account to no one for the milk."

"My brother, may the Omnipotent God recompense your charity!"

"Amen," responded the herdsman.

"Amen," repeated the unknown, immediately fixing his attention upon the man who had uttered this word, and then adding: "Are you with us?"

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the persecutors who sought his precious remains (Roman Martyrology). St. Paul was removed in 289 and St. Peter in 295, years in which the Martyrology names Basilus and Tuscus as Consuls. It was not till a much later period that the bodies of these two Apostles were deposited in that part of St. Peter's Basilica, called the Confession.

"I am with you," fearlessly and firmly replied the herdsman to this question which, at that time, had, perhaps, dismayed more than one Christian of equally unyielding faith.

"What is your name?"

"I am called Rusticus."

"Rusticus!" exclaimed the stranger, "the guardian of Peter's tomb? the faithful Rusticus who resides in the humble dwelling I noticed in front of the gardens of Domitius Severus?"

"The same," replied the herdsman, whose turn it now was to examine the unknown with astonishment. "And," added he, "it is because I saw you from afar prostrate on that sacred tomb that, after offering you the milk which I would as readily have given to any other exhausted traveler, I answered amen. But," he continued, multiplying his questions, "Who has shown you where the tomb of Peter is? How happens it that you know me? How comes it that you are not ignorant of even the least details concerning the spot on which we now stand?"

In answer to the first question, the stranger, gently smiling, produced the plan he had just used and by the careful study of which he had been able to calculate exactly the localities of the Vatican field, on which, however, he had never before set foot. At the same time drawing from under his vestments another leaf of papyrus, folded in the form of a letter, he handed it to the herdsman, saying:

"He who drew this plan is the same who informed me that Rusticus was the faithful guardian of Peter's tomb. It is he, also, who placed in my hands this letter to Rusticus, which I have carried for three years."

"There is but one man," interrupted the herdsman, "that would think of writing to Rusticus, and he an old man that formerly liked to visit me, and who, during his last stay in Rome, made me the depositary of important documents. I wish to hear from your lips his name, which has not been pronounced in my hearing for more than ten years."

"Agatho," quickly answered the unknown.

"Yes, Agatho," repeated the herdsman, now viewing the traveler with still greater interest, "Agatho, who once saved the life of a young slave that he afterwards adopted as

his son.—Young man, are you he of whom a noble matron, Aula Plautia Laterana, has often spoken to me when, accompanied by the holy woman Eva, she comes to kneel, as you have done, at Peter's tomb?"

"In my turn," replied the unknown, "I would like to hear you pronounce the name which Agatho has given me, if you know it."

"Severian," said the herdsman, unhesitatingly.

"Severian, yes, my brother," replied the unknown, whom our readers have doubtless already recognized. "Severian," he murmured, as if speaking to himself, "Severian, that a master called Pollux, to distinguish him from Castor, his twin brother! Castor, whom I have so often remembered before God! What has become of him? After so many years, shall I again find him in this Rome which I am about to enter?"

"The holy old man, Agatho, is he still alive?" asked the herdsman, recalling Severian from the reverie into which he had so suddenly fallen. "Have you seen him lately?"

"Not for three years, the length of time, as I told you, my brother, I have carried the letter, which, at the moment of my departure, he gave me in charge for you. During this long period, spent in visiting distant countries, which Agatho himself formerly visited, I have not been able to obtain any information of my father, but I am confident that on my return to Spain I shall find him, notwithstanding his great age, as full of life as he was when I left him."

Then, passing of his own accord to some questions he desired to ask the herdsman, Severian said.

"The holy bishop Caius,* is he now in Rome? I wished that my first steps in his city should conduct me to the tomb of his glorious predecessor, but I shall have to render him an account of the mission imposed upon me by Agatho, and I will acquit myself of this duty as soon as I shall have partaken of the hospitality which my father requested for me from the noble lady whose name you have mentioned and who, moreover, as you say, has known me a long time."

*St. Caius, 28th successor of St. Peter. He was elected Bishop of Rome December 17th, 283; died April 22nd, 296.

"Bishop Caius lives near the Capena Gate."*

"From which I have just come, for I followed the Appian way from Brindusium to the gate you have just named, near which I obtained the directions bringing me here. Besides," added he, "my business with Bishop Caius is too important to be disposed of in one interview, it requires several. At present, I ought to think of nothing but reaching the Salarian way. I pray you, my brother, tell me the best route of arriving there as soon as possible."

The herdsman, Rusticus, thus addressed, advised Severian to follow the "pomœrium" no longer, but, passing by the Triumphal Bridge, to cross the Field of Mars until he reached the hill of Gardens, a short distance beyond which was the Salarian way that, in case he should become embarrassed, could easily be pointed out to him by the first person he might meet. On separating, these two Christians, whom chance or Providence had thus brought together, pressed each other's hands and gave the customary kiss of peace. Then, Severian, thanking Rusticus and promising to see him soon again, set out on the road leading to the Aurelian Gate, which it was necessary to pass through before entering Rome by the Triumphal Bridge.

CHAPTER VI.

FROM THE VATICAN HEIGHTS.

ARRIVED at the Vatican fields, Severian, casting a glance to the left, perceived the Vatican Hill, whose slight and gradually rising declivities were not sufficient to discourage a traveler like himself, accustomed to overcoming his momentary fits of weakness. The sun, whose heat had been distressing during this day's journey, was just finishing his course, extinguishing his fires in the depths of the Tyrrhenium sea.

*We have proved in Aurelia, vol. 1st, note 13 of page 60, that the Christian Pontiff's place of residence was situated near the third mile-stone on the Appian way, and was not changed until the time of Constantine. (See that note.)

Notwithstanding Severian's manifest desire of arriving promptly at the end of his journey, he was unable to resist the thought of turning from his route, and mounting the hill where, during the pleasant hours in which he might have found refreshing rest, he remained contemplating that marvelous Rome he was about to enter. In a few moments he had climbed Mount Vatican, and then, as if dazzled with astonishment, he sank down, rather than seated himself, on a grassy hillock shaded by the large pines of Caesonius Severus' villa.

The incomparable splendor of Imperial Rome, unveiling itself immediately before the bewildered vision of the young and enthusiastic traveler, instantly suspended in his mind every other sentiment but that of mute admiration,—completely absorbed in his feelings, he remained as if transfixed to the spot on which he had just reclined.

At this, the dying hour of the day, Rome submerged, we may say, in the thick vapors which, even at the present, rise slowly from the great inequalities of the soil with a motion resembling the undulations of the sea, the great city itself almost as boundless as the sea—the summit of her edifices now visible at the feet of her seven hills, and now suddenly revealing themselves along the abrupt sides of these hills—here buried in darkness, there resplendent in light, the brazen roofs of a hundred temples, or the tall spires of the Obelisks, reflecting the sun's glittering light crowned in its immensity with purple clouds, adorning houses and palaces with a golden halo traversed by cloudy rays of violet—appeared, in the midst of space, like one of those visions that at first the eye can scarce endure, and before which the mind remains enraptured. That tumultuous noise, as of old Ocean's waves resounding along the shore at close of day, was not wanting to the sublimity of this Queen of the world at the moment of ushering in the oft disturbed silence of her mysterious nights. Here, as elsewhere, doubtless even stronger than elsewhere, arose the tumult of joyous cries mingled with the bitter moans of suffering, and this confused voice of humanity, increasing, mounted to that Omnipotent Being who ever hears and ever bears them in remembrance.

When Severian was sufficiently recovered from the bewilderment of this glorious vision to extend his view, he found

the horizon bounded by the bluish line of the Sabine mountains; on his right, partly obscured by the coming shades of night, a statue, placed like a golden star amidst this azure, glittered with reflected light, and appeared like a globe of fire lit up in the darkness. This was the statue of the King of the gods, in gilded bronze and of colossal size, overlooking, from the top of the high colonnades and superb pediment adorning the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, the entire city.

Opposite this temple, but the whole Forum's length beyond, built from the rock on which, since the time of Tarquin, it had seemed immovably seated, was an enormous mass of stone, dark and silent as the night that now enveloped it, a veritable mountain raised up in the midst of this plain by the hands of men. It drew forth an exclamation of anguish from him who, contemplating it but an instant, immediately recognised the immense edifice—that amphitheatre of bloody memory whose name resounded throughout the entire world.

"The Coliseum!" cried he, signing his forehead with the sacred sign of the cross, and raising towards Heaven a look filled with sadness and enthusiasm.*

And when his eyes were again turned on the monuments crowded together in this part of Rome, as humble houses are elsewhere, he caught a glimpse of another mass, all marble and porphyry, standing on the Palatine Mount and opposite the Coliseum—its innumerable porticoes of jasper and roofs of gilded brass illuminated by the thousand rays of the dying sun with the splendor of an immense conflagration. He again cried out:

"The Palace of the Cæsars!"

Then embracing at a single glance these three objects, the statue of Jupiter, the Coliseum, the galleries of the Imperial house, he added:

"It was not chance that inspired the Flavians in selecting the site of their amphitheatre. On these bloody arenas should the religion of the Empire and the Empire itself

* The Coliseum was not then so called; it was known only as the amphitheatre of the Flavians, because it had been begun by Vespasian, continued by Titus, and finished by Domitian. But we have used the more recent name as more significant and striking to the reader.

meet. Jupiter and Cæsar have been of one mind in causing the destruction of man by the monsters of the desert, it is but meet then, that both Jupiter and Cæsar, one from his temple, the other from his porticoes, should together look down and feast their sight with such spectacles!"

However, night had come, and the lights springing up in all quarters of Rome warned the traveler that it was time to descend the hill and reach the Aurelian Gate ere its keepers let fall its solid bars. But though impossible for Severian to distinguish anything besides the vast outlines of Adrian's mole,* a new giant of stone situated some hundred steps before him, or that part of the river's course furrowed at his feet by the watermen's vessels, all lit up with their large torches, he seemed unable to detach his eyes from the visions that had held him entranced, and ceased not his efforts to penetrate the gloom of night enveloping the city, as though, despite the darkness, he still perceived some height illuminated by the last glimmerings of light lost in space.

Perhaps, as the evening breeze refreshed his burning brow, he heard but the vague murmurings of the tall pines, whose rustling summits waved gently over his head, perhaps he also yielded to the inward communings of his soul, and lent an ear to the sighs of a heart, bleeding at the recollections of the past and the more overwhelming sorrows of the present.

At last the young traveler, shaking off his reveries, took up his staff and rose to his feet, as if about to resume his journey, but making a few steps, he stopped, and might have been heard murmuring these words, whilst his eyes were ardently fixed upon the city which, though it had disappeared, he still seemed to contemplate:

"Here, then, is that Rome from which, in childhood, I went a slave, and to which I return a free man! Where is the landmark near which Agatho lifted up my bleeding body? Where is the master whose whip had scarcely left me a breath of life? Alone I was then, alone I am again to-day! Alone! No! I had but one brother, and to-morrow it will not be one only of those whom I have never seen,

*Now the Castle of St. Angelo.

one of those who have never met me that I can call by this name, and who, perhaps, will not address me thus! Has not this already happened but an instant ago, when God directed the good goatherd to my side? Alone! Oh! no, I come to Rome as I did to other countries, the words of peace on my lips, that charity which is love in my heart! I come to the poor and the rich; I come to the sorrowful and to the joyful; I come to the slave and to the master; to the ignorant and the learned; to the fool and the wise; to the Christian and his persecutor; to all, for before Christ there are neither poor nor rich, neither master nor slave; the ignorant, the foolish, the persecutor of to-day, may become the teacher, the sage, the martyr of to-morrow; in the eyes of God they are but men, men made to love one another, and the day will yet come when, loving one another, they shall taste the sweets of universal peace springing from the charity of Christ and his salvation!

"Oh! Rome of whom I have yet caught but a glimpse!" again, after a pause of some moments, exclaimed the young man, who still stood motionless upon the hill, only his two hands moving amidst the gloom. "Rome, whose very breath has reached me and whose pulsations I feel, thou art truly Queen of the world, and wilt be forever! Thou art the mother whose seven mysterious breasts are to nourish in turn all nations. Thou art the bride who didst keep her lamp trimmed and burning to meet the Spouse. He came, but jealous hands have slain him! thou hast wept over his body, thou hast embalmed it in spices, thou hast hidden it under the stone, and it is thy hands that must remove the herbage from this tomb in order to breathe the perfumes arising from the sacred spot. Oh! Rome, thou art not a widow! The spouse has returned. He was not dead, he dies not. He has changed his name. He was called Peter, now Caius. He is at thy gate, he is about to enter. Those who opposed him have been dispersed! The Emperors are no longer there; they go to the Barbarians and the Barbarians to them. The new King is ready; he has prepared his crown: he is about to place it upon the forehead of his well beloved. Oh! Rome, mother, spouse, queen!"

At this moment, a startling sound rent the air, and withdrawing Severian from his enthusiasm, interrupted the

words thus flung to the echoes of night. It was the trumpets of the Aurelian Gate, whose keepers, repeating the flourish from the citadel of the Capital, warned the citizens that night had come, and Rome was about to be enclosed within her girdle of stone.

Severian, though he did not understand this signal, hastened to descend the Vatican hill, and succeeded in reaching the Aurelian Gate before the fall of the heavy bars, assuring its formidable defences, had opposed an insurmountable obstacle to his entrance into that city still called the city of the Cæsars.

And thus, following the path traced out by Rusticus, that is, first crossing the Triumphal Bridge, then the Field of Mars to the hill of Gardens, he at last, with the aid of additional information, arrived at the Salarian way which was the end and object of his long journey.

Our readers have recollected that, for some time, it had been a part of Ctesiphon's routine to station himself every evening opposite the dwelling of Aula Plautia Laterana, and that this evening he was strongly pre-occupied in consequence of his interview with Carpinatius. They have recollected also, that Severian, espying him amidst the obscurity, and wishing to assure himself that this was the dwelling of that noble matron ere he claimed her hospitality, had spoken to him; but that Ctesiphon, casting a single glance at the unknown, seemed stupefied with terror, and fled without answering, leaving the stranger convinced that he had addressed some unfortunate lunatic. Nevertheless, Severian, promptly recovering from his astonishment, advanced along the Salarian way to investigate for himself, and having discovered several indications mentioned by Agatho, he knocked with his traveler's staff upon the threshold of this patrician dwelling.

The door was soon opened, and Severian found himself in the presence of the servant who had answered the knock.

"May the peace of the Lord be in this house," then said the traveler, making use of the pious formula with which Christians of that period saluted one another on visiting.

"Amen," responded the servant.

And he added:

"My brother, whom do you wish to see?"

"Aula Plautia Laterana, as requested by the holy old man, Agatho."

"Eva," said the servant, perceiving her whose history our readers have not forgotten, and who now silently crossed the "atrium," "here is a stranger asking to see our noble mistress, in the name of the venerable Agatho."

"May the Lord be with him," answered Eva.

And advancing towards Severian:

"My brother," said she, without lifting her eyes, "you are welcome to this house. Follow me; I am going to conduct you to her whom you wish to see."

But Severian, at the name of Eva, knelt down before her, until his forehead almost touched the marble pavement.

"Are you," asked he, "the holy woman of whom Agatho has so often spoken to me? Are you she whom charity converted, and who has had the happiness, the glory, of confessing the name of Christ? Ah! permit me to kiss the hand that would not be lifted in sacrifice to the gods!"

So saying, he seized the old servant's hand and respectfully raised it to his lips. As he rose from his knees, Eva regarded him an instant, and this glance sent such a thrill of emotion through her whole being that, weak and almost fainting, she leaned her trembling body against a pillar for support.

Here she remained some minutes, fixed to the spot, quivering in every nerve, her startled eyes searching the stranger's face, who, struck with surprise, knew not how to interpret the strange emotion he had so unexpectedly excited.

At last, Eva overcoming herself, and quitting the support she had sought, said to Severian:

"Come with me, my brother. Blessed be he who, in Agatho's name, has entered this dwelling!"

CHAPTER VII.

A MISERABLE CREATURE.

IF now, the reader wishes to know whither Ctesiphon had fled after his encounter with the stranger, and what was the cause of the sudden terror which had attached wings to this bulky individual, we must return to that miserable looking house where the interview with Carpinatius had taken place.

After the glimpse we have had of Rome's magnificence, it cannot be uninteresting to lift a corner of the veil covering her infamy and deformities.

Ctesiphon, all breathless, stopped at the door of the house he had quitted two hours before, but, instead of entering the ground floor, he ascended the stairs until he reached the sixth story ending in a miserable chamber, the door of which he hastily opened, and rushed in, exclaiming:

"The other! the other! the other! I tell thee it is the other! Dost thou really hear! He is not dead! I have seen him! He has spoken to me!"

A strange giggling laugh was the only response to Ctesiphon's exclamations, and during the minute of silence which followed, a still stranger noise was heard, the motions of a human being, whose bones knocked together, and whose body trembled incessantly, agitated by convulsive spasms.

"The wretch!" cried Ctesiphon, sinking discouraged upon a seat: "it is finished, truly finished! I flattered myself vainly; there is no more hope! He no longer sees! He no longer hears! He no longer understands!"

And Ctesiphon, striking the ground with his foot, as one who had seen his last hope vanish, resumed that air of gloomy anger, always observable in his countenance after any length of time passed in this cursed chamber, and buried himself anew in his reflections.

"All is lost!" murmured he, at the end of a few moments. "I have waited thirty years, and when vengeance was almost within reach, and might have been grasped, since the other is not dead, she suddenly escapes me! That Carpinatius will gather the fruit! Since these last few days,

after seeing him at the Circus Maximus near Furius, I have wished to know what he was plotting at Rome, and, may the gods confound him! he has not concealed it from me! Yes, Selene is in my hands, and there is Chaerestrate! He has, doubtless, guessed that Sotades is not far off! But he has the Cæsar Galerius with him—and Galerius, he says, is a rough auxiliary! If I only had the decree! but I have not, and Chaerestrate no longer has it, and the miserable wretch, now that I have found him, cannot tell to whom he has given it? Agatho! Rustieus! What are these men, and where are they? Who will point them out to me? How discover them?"

Then Ctesiphon, rising from his seat, went towards the poor creature who, during this monologue, had not ceased to tremble from head to foot, nor to give vent to his stupid laugh. Seizing him by the arm, and shaking him violently:

"Chaerestrate! Chaerestrate!" said Ctesiphon, "dost thou hear me? Canst thou answer me? It is Sotades who speaks to thee, Sotades who has never done thee any ill—who has welcomed thee, who has fed, who has taken care of thee! Chaerestrate, he speaks of Selene whom thou didst once sell him, and of her two children whom he afterwards sold thee! See here! answer! Where is the decree? Dost thou want gold? thou shalt have it. Dost thou see my hands, they are full of it! But the decree! the decree! the decree!"

Saying this, Sotades passed, from one hand to the other, some pieces of gold, the noise of which resounding as it fell, was multiplied by the echoes of this wretched room, and the yellow hue of each piece faintly gleamed in the borrowed light of a smoky lamp fastened to one of the walls.

Then happened something strange.

Chaerestrate, hitherto trembling and crouched in a corner from which he never moved, ceased to tremble. This imbecile old creature who appeared neither to hear, see, nor understand, suddenly hears, sees, and understands. The sound of gold has operated this wonderful transformation, and restored his lost senses. With eyes almost starting from their sockets, he darts at Sotades, uttering a loud cry, and this cry, resembling the roar of a savage animal, has replaced his frightful laugh.

But Sotades, doubtless accustomed to this awakening of the brute, instantly moves back and eludes his grasp. Then, still continuing to make the gold jingle and sparkle, he goes all around the room, calling Chaerestrate, provoking him to follow, exciting him as much as possible by the sight of the gold pieces, which will be his, truly his, provided he speaks, telling where the decree is, and, especially, who Agatho and Rusticus are, where they are, and how to reach them!

It was a hideous spectacle!

The miserable old man, aroused by the sight of the gold, quivering at every repeated tingle, consumed with desire, intoxicated with hope, always believing himself about to seize what continually escaped him, breathless, still follows Sotades, endeavoring to stop or overtake him; his lips, white with foam, emitted coarse sounds resembling no articulate words; his trembling body, that a breath could have overcome, recovered itself at the moment of falling, and Sotades can scarcely avoid the convulsive grip of the long, almost fleshless arms, stretched out towards him, and the contracted hands, clutching at space.

During half an hour, perhaps, in a circuit of some feet around the cracked and blackened walls of this sinister chamber, but the uncertain glimmer of a nearly exhausted lamp, that is, almost in utter darkness, was continued this eager pursuit for gold, this unwitnessed struggle between the two old men.

It was, yes, we must repeat it—it was a frightful scene!

Whoever, by a fatal chance, had been an invisible spectator of this terrifying spectacle, would not have understood it. Amidst the noise made by the rapid, echoing footsteps of these two men, nothing could be distinguished but the despairing, unmeaning imprecations of Chaerestrate, and the tantalizing words of Sotades, sometimes sweet and caressing for him whose furious avidity they still redoubled, and sometimes changed into curses, launched against some divinity, we know not what, inexorable as Hatred or sombre as Vengeance.

At last, what was to take place, did. Exhausted by the same efforts which had been made to reanimate his imbecile old age, and snatch from him, through his love of gold

(the only idea of which he was not bereft), one word, one word that might be a gleam of light, Chaerestrate, stumbling a third time and unable to rise, fell an inert mass, and uttering a savage cry of impotent rage, rolled to the feet of the disheartened Sotades.

The latter was himself dripping with perspiration, his breast heaving, his relaxing hands no longer able to retain the useless and coveted gold, and he sank down upon the only seat contained in this denuded chamber.

"Arouse thyself, Chaerestrate! The pieces of gold are scattered on all sides; they are come to thee; thy miserable tunic is covered with them; thou canst seize them, thou canst keep them! Sotades will not prevent thee! Come, Chaerestrate! one grand effort! Stretch thy long arms, contract just once more thy greedy hands and the pieces are thine, truly thine!"

But Chaerestrate moves not; his fingers are contracted, but they open not; in vain does the gold resound as it strikes the floor of stones, he has ceased to hear; in vain does it glitter rolling along, he has ceased to see. Is he a corpse? No, a corpse does not tremble, and convulsive movements again frightfully agitate those limbs, whose rigidity prevents not their quakings.

Meanwhile, Sotades has somewhat recovered; he is less breathless, and his eyes are fixed upon the old man, whose body, deprived of all feeling, lies senseless at his feet.

"Always the same result!" cried he, with an accent of profound discouragement. "How many times have I not awakened the appetites of this wretch, and how many times have I not seen him just as I do now, more imbecile after these violent agitations that have secured him gold, and stifled his longing desires, than he was before? What is, henceforth, to be done with this idiot? Will he speak? never! Consequently, what is the use of keeping him here in the corner, feeding him? for in an hour he will resume his old place and his frightful giggling? Why ever return to this degraded being? Why take care of this brute? Would it not be better for both of us, were his existence at an end? How accomplish it? Simply lock the door of this chamber and return no more! Shall I do it? no! Why? I know not, but I will not do it! I will return. And yet,

has not this man made my entire life one of misery? Oh, Selene! Selene! since the day thou wert put in the balance, and he wanted twice thy weight in gold, what sufferings, what anguish, what tortures, what despair!"

And for a long time, a very long time, with a melancholy air, Sotades silently contemplated the wretched idiot, whose convulsive movements were the only indications of life.

But Chaerestrate, extended at his feet, did not entirely occupy his mind; he had become pensive, more and more absorbed in the reflections arising from his interview with Carpinatius, and still further increased by the other events of this memorable evening.

How these events had, indeed, followed one another in quick succession!

First, this Carpinatius who has been in Rome some days, and is restored, we know not how, to the good graces of Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus with whom he had been embroiled, persuades the latter to accompany him to Sirmium, and there from the Cæsar Galerius obtain consolation for the insults at the Circus, and also the means of revenge. Then this stranger appearing suddenly in the Salarian way addressing Sotades, and inquiring of him where the house of Aula Plautia Laterana is. This stranger who is immediately identified by his striking resemblance to Furius, is the other son of Selene, it is he whom Sotades formerly sold with his twin brother to Chaerestrate!

"So," murmurs Sotades, speaking to himself, "the son and mother are together in the same house; they are going to live under the same roof, nothing remains now but to make them known to each other. And this is the very time that Carpinatius has chosen to take Furius off. Furius, whom I have longed for, Furius who was to repay me for my thirty years of torture and unhappiness!"

After these few words, Sotades gives himself up entirely to the overwhelming bitterness of his reflections.

"Oh! Vengeance!" exclaimed he again, "since the time I have brooded over thee, what hast thou given me, what art thou going to offer me? I have asked of thee an instrument, an occasion, a victim, a reward! The instrument, behold it!" and he pushed Chaerestrate with his foot.

"The opportunity never hast thou offered it! The victim, an unhappy woman whose sufferings have been greater than mine, and who has borne them much better than I have done! The reward! doubtless, some beggar who, at the last moment, thou sendest me in exchange for the rich Furius! Delusion! Ah! ah! ah!"

At this instant, a harsher laugh than the bitter one of Sotades mingles with these accents of vexation, and these reproaches, addressed to the implacable divinity whose name he would not pronounce before Carpinatius. It is the giggle of Chaerestrate, who, recovered from his torpor, immediately commences to wriggle back to the obscure corner he always keeps, and in which he is, no doubt, astonished at not finding himself. Sotades, at this sight, cannot restrain a vivid emotion. He rises from his seat, and leaves the chamber, but soon reappears bearing a pitcher and some food which he places before the miserable idiot, tenderly coaxing him to eat if he is hungry, and drink if he is thirsty.

And this is how, by the daily care and attention of Sotades, was prolonged the existence of the wretched old man, whom no one at Rome suspected of being concealed in this squalid abode.

Chaerestrate having eaten and drunk, Sotades now retires from the chamber which had witnessed these scenes, a more faithful portrayal of which we could have wished it in our power to present. Not omitting his usual precaution, he locks the door of this deserted room, descends the stairs, and once more finds himself on the street.

Day begins to dawn, a gloomy day, obscured by the thick vapors which, at Rome, as we have already remarked, envelop the city just before the rising and immediately after the setting sun. Sotades penetrates this damp fog and disappears, doubtless for the purpose of regaining one of the dwellings where he seeks that repose which is certainly needed after a night passed in the manner we have described.

Those who, every morning, were accustomed to see Ctesiphon directing his steps towards the hill of Gardens, there enjoying, by the help of full and vigorous lungs, the wholesome air it can still boast of, were surprised this day, that a citizen so punctual should have neglected one of his most

healthy habits. On the Forum, Lupicinus, the banker, when closing his office, remarked to the "magister de auctio," that he was much surprised at not seeing the opulent "mensarius" during the briskest hours of business.

"To-morrow," added he, "Ctesiphon himself will regret not having assisted at the little disturbance between the creditors of Ursidius, which we have just had the satisfaction of witnessing. I am persuaded he would not have been sorry at seeing the lengthened faces of all these honest men when they heard the news of their debtor's flight—an event which Ctesiphon's exquisite sagacity had foreseen."

But Sotades was present in the Nomentanian way, whence, towards noon, a grand retinue issued forth, crossing Rome until it reached that point at which the Flaminian way commences.

This grand retinue was that of Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus, who, seated beside Carpinatius in a commodious "rheda," or four-wheeled traveling carriage, drawn by eight vigorous "veredi" (post-horses), set out from Rome on his way to Sirmium, his route laying along the great German highway.

CHAPTER VII.

VENGEANCE.

THIRTY years previous to the events related in the last chapter, Sotades had replied to Selene who, kneeling at his feet, begged him for her children:

"Hatred to thee! hatred to them! Vengeance upon thee! vengeance forever upon them!"

And he immediately fled to rejoin Chaerestrate, who had borne off the twins and was endeavoring to stifle their cries.

It was (our readers recollect) a fearfully stormy night, and the unchained winds in their fury easily silenced all human sounds, were they even those despairing accents sometimes heard amidst the thunders' roar or the heavy groans of the tempest.

Having gone three or four hundred steps Sotades stopped, very much astonished at hearing no noise indicating the

presence of his accomplices. The darkness prevented him from seeing, and he began to call aloud, profiting by the short intervals during which the fury of the storm seemed to be somewhat appeased. But no voice responded to his own, no signal, penetrating the gloom, indicated towards what point of the horizon he must direct his steps.

Sotades, though anxious and troubled, dreamed not of treachery. He thought that Chaerestrate and his associates had hastened to take refuge from the storm, and that the next morning would see them all together.

Nevertheless, he endeavored to make his voice heard; but his reiterated appeals losing themselves uselessly in the gloom, he busied himself in seeking a shelter, which he at last found under a rock, there resolving to await patiently the dawn of day, still persuaded that the obscurity, which had prevented his distinguishing any object on the plain, and the winds, which had drowned his voice, were the sole cause of what had happened. However, during the long hours passed thus, Sotades more than once asked himself if what he had just accomplished was right, and also if he had done well to confide in Chaerestrate.

As soon as the first glimmerings of dawn succeeded this night of desolation and began faintly to enlighten the surrounding places, Sotades emerged from his retreat and took in, at one long glance, a view of the country. It looked as if buried under a thick bed of snow, whose dazzling white was here and there relieved by piles of great black branches which the last efforts of the storm still agitated and carried about from place to place. These were the remnants of broken limbs snatched from the trees by the impetuous winds of this awful night. No human being appeared upon this even surface scarcely varied, except where, from the midst of a slight depression in the ground, arose a small number of isolated rocks like that which had afforded Sotades a shelter.

He, unfortunate wretch, now suspecting the perfidy of his accomplices, examined every rock but discovered no one; he sought footprints in the snow, but the snow was still falling and for a long time every track had been effaced; the winds still whistled, and his voice, endeavoring to make itself heard, was lost in space, even as every vestige had disappeared from the soil.

Then Sotades, in despair, completely overcome, seated himself on a side of the last rock he had visited and, as he was a man of tender heart, began to shed tears abundantly. The snow continued to fall, enveloping him in its thick flakes; but he seemed unconscious of it, so much absorbed was he in his sorrowful thoughts. From time to time he raised his head and looked slowly around the horizon, as if all hope were not yet dead; but nothing met his gaze except thick clouds veiling it on every side. One point only attracted his attention, and his glances, in spite of him, would fix themselves upon this point, though every glance excited an exclamation of anger or cry of vengeance. It was the humble roof of a miserable cabin dimly descried afar off in the very heart of this desert where Sotades wept with rage, reflecting on his own abandonment.

Was it the roof under which Selene lived? Was it the cabin into which he had penetrated to snatch from her her children?

He knew not, nor was there any sign by which he could recognize it. During the night he had followed the men who guided himself and Chaerestrate to the spot, but these guides having disappeared, he was no longer able to say whether this poor hut, dimly seen through the crowded flakes of an incessant snow, was the scene of that cruel robbery in which he had proved himself merciless beyond his own conceptions. One moment, yielding to the secret impulse of a heart not absolutely closed to remorse or compassion, he rose from the side of the rock and made a few steps towards the object of his attention; but immediately returned, and, seating himself again, was once more plunged in a reverie. It seemed as if that cruel, mocking demon, who delights in enkindling all the fires of anger and heinous revenge in man's soul when he is overcome by sorrowful reflections, whispered these tantalizing words in his ear:

"Thou wilt return to Selene? Thou no longer fearest her insulting laugh? Hast thou then forgotten, that to give herself to another, she meditated and accomplished thy ruin, had thee expelled from thy own dwelling, and wished that the soldiers who dragged thee off had put thee to death?—Thou hast forgotten also the deed of last night? What answer canst thou make when she asks what has become of

her children, the two sons of Aelius Gaurus? Thou no longer hast them! Chaerestrate has disappeared with them! He is going afar off to sell them! He has deceived thee, shamefully deceived thee! Indeed?—Ah! Thou hast hopes of Selene! She will hasten to pardon Sotades! She has always hated him, but she will hate him no more. She once delighted in overwhelming him with contempt, but she will now heap caresses upon him! Sotades will restore her life; Sotades will be everything to her! Fool! Oh! she is not now that Selene who, at Rome (as Chaerestrate formerly said), would sell for twenty times her weight in gold! Aelius Gaurus abandoned her because her beauty was gone, her youth was faded! What matters that? for Sotades, Selene is always Selene! To possess her he would still place all his gold in the balance. He would think no more of what he has suffered from her insults, her contempt, her sarcasms, her perfidy, her avidity, her treachery! Ah! ah! ah!"

"Whoever thou art that speakest to me," cried Sotades, arousing himself, "thou art right, no weakness! What I have done has been justly done!—Instead of going to Selene, I must go to Chaerestrate! I must find him and take from him these children who belong to me, because Selene is my slave, who are still mine, because Chaerestrate has never paid me for them!"

And turning again towards that point of the horizon which revealed the miserable cabin now more distinctly than at first, the snow storm having somewhat abated: "If thou art there, Selene," he continued, "curses upon thee! not for all the sorrows with which thou hast repaid my love, not for thy contempt, nor thy outrages, not for my ruin and present poverty, but for what thou hast caused me to become! I was good and am wicked; I was virtuous and am depraved; I had affections and have none; I felt generous instincts of dignity, of honor, of confidence in my fellow beings, and all this has been replaced by what? I dare not say! Curses, then, on thee and thy children! Vengeance! yes, vengeance on thee! Vengeance! vengeance forever on them!"

In pronouncing these words, Sotades lifted up both his hands, as if extending them afar off over the poor hut into

which, that very moment, some Christian women had penetrated to succor Selene, still lying insensible on the floor, and to lavish upon her all the kind offices of charity, during that long and serious illness resulting from the frightful scenes she had witnessed, and the cruel loss of her children.

However, all hesitation had abandoned Sotades. Having reflected an instant as to what direction to take, he immediately set out for Bysia, the nearest city, and where it was most likely that Chaerestrate would seek refuge, the better to cover his flight and premeditated robbery.

At Bysia, Sotades discovered some traces of Chaerestrate, but was told that he had left almost immediately for an unknown destination. Perhaps he had gone towards Byzantium, or to some of the opulent cities of Asia Minor, or he may have returned to Greece, where he possessed the principal establishment of his infamous trade.

Sotades hastened to Byzantium, but the man he sought had not been there.

In Bythinia, he visited successively Heraclia, Nicomedia, Nicaea; in Mysia, Cyzicus and Pergamos; Mytilene, in the isle of Lesbos; in Lydia, Sardis, Smyrna and Philadelphia; and in none of these provinces, none of these important centres could he collect the slightest information calculated to put him upon the track of what he had lost.

There now remained but Greece.

Hastening, with all possible speed, to that Thebes where, unfortunately, he had known Chaerestrate and lived with Selene the life we have endeavored to depict, there awaited him a deception of another nature. For he learned that the slaver's foolish prodigalities having accomplished his ruin, the creditors had just sold the sumptuous dwelling and its inmates. Consequently, when Chaerestrate, in the place where Sotades, after his expulsion from the lands of Aelius Gaurus, had sought a retreat, came and proposed purchasing Selene's children, he was only an insolvent kidnapper in quest of new profits, and founding the hope of his first gains upon the sale of these twins.

Sotades was obliged to remain some time at Thebes, his long investigations having exhausted his strength as well as means; but he had determined to leave as soon as he obtained any tidings of Chaerestrate, and even before could

he succeed in procuring the money necessary for his continued researches. He wished to secure absolute possession of Selene's two children—the thought of snatching them from Chaerestrate had now become the object of his life, the one idea which absorbed and almost consumed it. And why? Was it to restore them to their mother? Was it to be still further revenged upon her by having them in his own hands? Or, was it simply because, having been the dupe of Chaerestrate, his wounded self-love rendered him impatient to retaliate upon this wretch?

We really believe that Sotades himself would have found it difficult to give a satisfactory answer to these questions. The truth is, that often, after heaping imprecations on the woman whose conduct so justly merited reproaches, he, in almost the same breath, spoke of her in such terms as would lead one to suppose that his ancient ardors were not extinguished, and that compassion still obtained the victory over resentment.

Whatever may have been the mysteries of his heart and its conflicting emotions, he determined, whilst awaiting the turn of events, to pursue the only occupation that could furnish him a living and the necessary resources for carrying out his plans.

He became a banker again. And as it was well known at Thebes that he was acquainted with the business, having, moreover, acquired considerable skill by his practice in Thrace, and being by no means a blockhead, he soon found himself in possession of an important capital.

Then, without delay, he set out for Italy.

CHAPTER IX.

UPON THE FORUM.

SOTADES directed his steps towards Italy because, after mature reflection, he was convinced that Chaerestrate, if not already in Rome, would soon find his way there, and he hoped to reach that city as promptly as possible, in order to be on the alert when the slave dealer made his appearance. But the Queen of the world was not the hospitable city which the unsophisticated banker (despite his unfavorable experience of men and things) had pictured from afar as an immense and kindly asylum, open to all the unfortunate. This simple, ingenuous Theban citizen could not foresee the new tribulations about to assail him the very moment of his arrival in this universal centre of egotism and interest, ready to wage war against the rash being who should venture the slightest approach.

The first thing, after arranging his ideas and marking out his plans, was to take a walk to the Forum of which he had so often heard, and where, having first examined the mode of conducting business, he intended to select a spot for his own counter. To be at the head of an establishment on the Forum had always been his ambition; he had formerly promised it to Selene, and a number of times sworn it to himself.

He returned enchanted with his first visit.

He had had a long interview with Lyco, the "mensarius," who, recognizing a compatriot, condescended to speak to him of the great profits which resulted from banking, and especially from certain secret operations presenting themselves nearly every day. The "argentarius," Damisippa, one of whose numerous specialities was changing money, had (without much loss to himself), converted into Roman coin the few old pieces of Thrace and Asia Minor, particularly of Lydia, which still remained to Sotades as a memento of his sojourn and travels in these various countries; and this conversion having been made in the presence of quite a crowd of other "argentarii," "nummularii," and brokers of every class, attracted by the strange questions and man-

ners of the young Greek newly arrived, he had understood as marks of consideration and deference these railleries disguised as testimonials of interest or offers of service.

Sotades returned to the "diversorium" or inn he had chosen, fully persuaded that the Roman bankers were the best people in the world, and, consequently, that nothing more remained for him but to take his place among them.

A few days after (for some little time was necessary to receive his last instructions and provide himself with a counter), he made his appearance on the Forum at a propitious hour, accompanied by a slave employed in public commissions, who carried, well balanced upon his head, the new wooden table intended to display in symmetrical piles the provision of coins with which the new banker would begin business. At a sign from Sotades the public slave deposited the wooden table in a place called "sub Veteribus,"* not very far from an old "argentarius," named Archibulus, whose counter descended from father to son since the time of Plautus,† and had never been supplanted in that part of the Forum. Sotades, after considerable reflection, had preferred this somewhat modest looking, though much frequented spot, to the other positions he might have taken among the brilliant brokers established near the temple of Castor, or in the neighborhood of the Puteal of Scribonius Libo.

However, whilst the improvised "mensarius" was absorbed in carefully disposing his piles of specie upon the new table, whose four legs prevented all unsteadiness that might have rolled the money off and scattered it on every side, he had not remarked two things, which nevertheless took place in the Forum at the instant of his entrance, and seemingly caused by the very fact of that entrance. The first was a commotion among the brokers of every class; and the second the deep and particular stupefaction of the "argentarius" Archibulus. The bankers collected in agitated groups, spoke in loud tones, gesticulated, summoned one another, came and went, every action evincing indignation against Sotades and his counter. Archibulus said

*Under the Old Stalls.
†Plautus, Asinar. Act. 1, sc. 1, verse 103; Curcul. Act. IV, sc. 1, verse 19.

nothing, but his immoderately distended eyes were fixed aghast on Sotades.

At length three individuals detached themselves from one of the groups and resolutely went to Archibulus. These three individuals, representing the divers classes of money dealers, were the "argentarius" Damisippa, the "mensarius" Lyco, and "nummularius" Timarchide. They, in a body, appeared before Archibulus, the "magister" it appeared of this honorable corporation, and having aroused him from his stupor they all (including himself) advanced, after a short conference, towards Sotades, who now began to perceive what was passing around him, and was much astonished at the expression of solemn gravity depicted in the faces of those by whom he was accosted.

"Young stranger," said Archibulus, using the Greek idiom, of which no "argentarius" at Rome was ignorant, and which Lyco had advised him to employ on account of Sotades' nationality, "what is your name?"

"Ctesiphon," answered Sotades, who on arriving in Italy had judged proper to assume a name. And passing immediately to a question he added: "What is your business with me?"

"What divinity, an enemy to concord among mortals, has inspired thee to come here?" said Archibulus, when he had told a sort of scribe, by whom he was accompanied, to carefully write in his register the name which had just been pronounced.

"An enemy to concord!" cried Ctesiphon, repeating the words of Archibulus. "That is what I call a good joke! The divinity is myself, desirous of sharing the fat profits of banking boasted of the other day by Lyco the 'argentarius,' and seldom met with except at the Forum. Can you see any harm in that?"

"There is indeed no harm," said Lyco, thus exposed by Ctesiphon, "but there are rules and conditions to be observed."

"What conditions?" asked Ctesiphon.

"Young Greek," resumed Archibulus, "I excuse thy ignorance, yet am astonished at thy not knowing that no one could open a money establishment, 'taberna argentaria,' on the Forum without being 'intra numerum.'"

"Intra numerum!" repeated Ctesiphon, evidently showing by his manner of pronouncing the expression that he had not comprehended the sense.

"Yes, 'intra numerum,' that is upon the official list committed to my charge, and composed exclusively of those who have been personally authorised by the Prince, or those who, not having received that favor, have the privilege (buying it or giving bail) of an 'argentarius,' 'mensarius,' 'nummularius,' etc., authentically recognized. And now, young Greek, dost thou understand why thy presence here has wounded concord, and that thou must leave immediately?"

"By Apollo and the nine Muses!" cried Ctesiphon, who indeed began to understand and consequently commenced to pick up his sestertia and put them safely away, lest he should be deprived of them anew. "A privilege to rob others! An official list of gold monopolists! By Plutus! one must come to Rome to find out what fooleries can be imagined! A lot of scoundrels!"

These last words accented like an exclamation, and just as the last sestertii that had been displayed disappeared in the depths of Ctesiphon's tunic, excited the sympathetic hilarity of a crowd collected around the victim of a very unpopular privilege, and some among them even applauded.

"Well said, Ctesiphon! Just right!"

"Young stranger," protested Archibulus, evidently believing it his duty, "the rashness of thy speech is equal at least to thy presumptuous ignorance! Thou dost not know then the importance of our functions! The 'argentarii' alone fix the legal rate of change; they prove the appearance or non-appearance of parties at law; they preside over the public sales of debtors' goods* and recover the amount; they receive deposits and consignments of silver. Would it be becoming then to confide such great and sacred interests to the unknown? Young stranger,—"

But the young stranger, yielding to necessity, had made a sign to the public slave accompanying him, and he,

*One of them bore, indeed, the title of "magister auctionum." Numerous authorities are necessary for the details which we have just given; but we will content ourselves with mentioning the principal sources; Cicero pro Quintro et pro Cæcina; Digeste de Usur. et de Edendo; Gaius IV, § 126; Saumaise de Usuris.

hastening to place the new table upon his head, disappeared, together with Ctesiphon who was somewhat gloomy towards the end of the protestation.

This manner of welcoming men, and putting an invincible obstacle in the way of their best planned projects had, nevertheless, the effect of teaching Ctesiphon a little prudence. He began to ask himself if there were no other means of well investing his capital, in some place disconnected with the privileges of the Forum, and where he would hear no more talk of an official list, or the purchased right of establishing a money bureau.

During several days he walked about the city, and what he at once styled his "good luck" conducted him to a more humble Forum, better known, however, as the "Forum pistorium" or bread market, situated on Mount Aventinus, in the thirteenth district of Rome.

There, more numerous than in any other place, were the lowest rank of changers, particularly the "collybistae," whom we have already mentioned as trafficking in articles of small value.

Their specialty was to offer money to citizens who had not enough for the purchase of their daily food, and receive in exchange a piece of furniture, a tunic, wares or other things less necessary to the support of a family than bread.

How many times had this Forum been the theatre of truly heart rending scenes.

It was here, for example, one could witness the sorrow of an indigent proletarian obliged to part with a favorite dog, or hear the lamentations of an old woman stifling in her last caresses the well beloved cat that, with tears, she delivered into the greedy hands of these merciless traders. Ctesiphon was very careful, after rendering himself acquainted with the simple mechanism of the business carried on and abundant profits, to ascertain whether the privilege of official nomenclature were necessary here as at the great Forum. He was informed the only privilege was that of having a sufficient quantity of sestertii, or merchandise in vogue, and capable of being exchanged for other articles.

Believing himself safe this time, Ctesiphon, not wishing to excite jealousy by too extravagant an appearance, neglected the new counter and contented himself with a fold-

ing table, which next morning he brought under his arm to the "Forum pistorium," and began to ornament it with sestertii and other small coins suitable to the operations of this infamous traffic.

But what a tempest! what vociferations! what furious invectives! what demonstrations of menacing fists from tho Archibulii and Lycos of this place, as soon as they saw Ctesiphon so unceremoniously install himself at a corner of the market and commence to invite custom. In the memory of man never, no never, had the like been seen at the "Forum pistorium," though a suspicious and well guarded neighborhood, as was all that region of Mount Aventinus bordering on the Tiber, and appropriated to the erection of public granaries and several little markets such as those for gray pease, beans, lupines; where the low people abounding, often showed themselves not a little tumultuous.

To conclude, this singular tempest was not of long duration. Three or four vigorous "collybistae" having, like their superiors at the great Forum, detached themselves from the principal groups, Ctesiphon's folding table, in less time than we write the account, was overturned and broken to pieces, his coins scattered in every direction were picked up by a hundred hands, and he himself obliged to seek safety in a prompt flight.

And these were the adventures, somewhat less agreeable than those mentioned by Horace, yet concerning which Ctesiphon could say with the poet:

> "Egressum magnâ; me excepit Aricia, Roma,
> Hospitio modico." *

That is, being obliged to quit the great city in which it was no longer possible to exercise his industry, Ctesiphon was very happy to find within tho humble walls of Aricia an undisputed hospitality.

There, by means of patience which he never lacked, and his excursions into the more or less important cities and villages scattered over the country contiguous to Rome, it happened that at the end of some years his banking had yielded sufficient profits to admit of his treating (we would

* Having left the great city, Aricia received me within her humble walls.

say at the present day) with the "mensarius" Lyco for the sale or rent of his (Lyco's) counter at the Roman Forum.

Ctesiphon had indeed arrived at the height of his ambition, and had no longer any fears of being stripped of his coveted honor; but on the other hand, the circumstances contributing to his success had prevented his knowledge of Chaerestrate's appearance at Rome, notwithstanding the immense excitement this slave dealer had occasioned on account of the extravagant bids made at his sales—his sale of the twins, and afterwards his speedy departure from Rome, either because he feared meeting Sotades, or what is most probable, because thanks to the enormous profit on the twins, he wished to engage in another exploit of kidnapping.

We must now say that the spirit of vengeance which almost consumed Sotades did not inflame in an equal degree the prudent Ctesiphon. Time had at least moderated if not extinguished this ardor, and a singular fancy, together with a passion whose latent germs were prodigiously increased, had contributed to diminish its impetuosity.

This singular fancy was a taste for poetry which had seized upon the spirit of Sotades, at the same time that a thirst for gold had commenced to devour his entrails.

There was something sympathetic between the tender, naturally melancholy soul of Ctesiphon, and the languors of poetry which consoled and sweetened his sorrows.

Gold once touched sends through the veins an unquenchable fire, consuming every other feeling and desire.

Sotades, in Thrace, had handled the sad metal; Ctesiphon, in the Roman countries, had filled both hands with the glittering bauble.

It is scarcely known what frightful conflagrations Rome, whose rays extended to the very extremities of the world, had enkindled at her gates and all around them. To understand how her own covetous passions could increase those of the inferior cities and ancient municipalities crowded around, and in constant communication with her, it would be necessary to relate strange accounts, compared to which a historical and detailed description of the objects contained at present in the secret museum of Naples would be but an incomplete and feeble commentary.

It would be especially incumbent on us to describe the

life led in these ruined villas by these impoverished patricians of whom we have already spoken, relics themselves of ancient families almost extinguished in distress.

An illustrious writer * has re-written Roman history in Rome and around Rome, yet there still remains to be given the world a description of its villas, from which alone could we well understand what Roman society has been at every period, particularly that we now contemplate. †

No one knew better than Ctesiphon the shameful state of affairs we refuse to detail, and no one, we must say, could have derived greater profits than he from his adventurous excursions during three or four years employed in traversing these countries desolated by luxury. He penetrated everywhere, witnessed disorders of every kind, was initiated into the darkest mysteries, and soon learned that in the mire of vice he would find more gold, fallen from hands incapable of holding it, than he could ever collect from the sands of Pactolus.

The "mensarius," with poetical taste and vulturous appetite, was then already very rich, when succeeding to the counter of his compatriot Lyco he at last established himself at the Forum.

He aspired to Rome because Rome was the centre of that conflagration, the flames of which he had seen spread all around her.

The lava descending from Vesuvius extends its waves afar; but the crater is that immense crucible where the melting rock bubbles incessantly.

At first our new banker's mode of managing affairs appeared very singular to his neighbors, who could not comprehend how this fat man (Ctesiphon had grown exceedingly corpulent) could turn so reluctantly from the perusal of one of his three favorite poets, Homer, Pindar, or Anacreon, to the transaction of some lucrative banking operation.

However, a close observer would have noticed that certain men often passed by Ctesiphon giving him a particular

* M. J. J. Ampère, who died prematurely, before the completion of this very interesting work.

† We ourselves acknowledge having attempted it in a work which would have been entitled "The Waters of Baia," but we abandoned the idea from motives that can readily be understood by all.

sign which, however slight, he never failed to see, even though at that very moment he appeared plunged in reading the most marvelous rhapsody* of his poet "par excellence" the divine Homer.

Some minutes after Ctesiphon, affecting the behavior of a man fatigued from admiration and in need of a little distraction, left his counter and hastened to rejoin the unknown in some secret place, which was often varied. The conference was limited to a few words, probably to a proposition accepted or refused, and Ctesiphon immediately returned to his counter. Only it sometimes happened that after these interviews the "mensarius" was absent from the Forum three or four days, and on his reappearance said that he had indulged in a short trip to the country, which was really true.

His associates were much amused at the extravagant whims of this fat "mensarius," who took no offence, however, at their jokes, often himself joining in the laugh, more frequently shrugging his shoulders. But it happened one day that he lost all inclination to laugh, his deepest attention being absorbed in a manner entirely different.

Hearing the wooden table of the "argentarius" Archibulus resounding with peculiar blows, he glanced towards it, and could scarcely restrain an exclamation of surprise on perceiving the child, who, standing beside the counter, challenged clients with the most deliberate air imaginable.

CHAPTER X.

HOW A CERTAIN FRUIT MATURES.

CTESIPHON, who had been rendered very prudent and, perhaps, slightly suspicious (which charge, at a later period, was brought against him by the young boy now riveting his attention), endeavored to conceal, as much as possible, all appearance of so vivid an interest. Resuming the habitual manner of a man accustomed to some dejection of spirits, he very softly approached the counter of Archibulus and fixed himself opposite the individual he wished to scan more closely.

*This word, now designating a ridiculous production, was then applied to various fragments of Homer, collected and sung by his fanatical admirers, styled Rhapsodists or Homerides.

Archibulus was one of those who had never retained any rancor against Ctesiphon, although he had taken part against him in that first unlucky installation at the Forum, and his energetic remonstrances had been as promptly resented. Seeing our fat banker, now in contemplation before the child rapping upon the wooden table, he made a few steps forwards, saying: "A pretty slave I have here, and he strikes well, don't you think so?"

"Charming, indeed! When and where did you come across this piece of good luck?"

"Bought luck, dear friend! I paid dearly for him, at a sale, the other day—the sale made by the creditors of that young fool, Servilius. Were you there? It was very interesting and the purchase of this knave hotly contested."

"You say at the sale of Servilius!" exclaimed Ctesiphon, stamping his foot upon the ground, to the great astonishishment of Archibulus, and evincing every sign of bitter regret. "Unfortunately," added he, "I had to forget the day it would take place, and was in Ostia! And the other? where is he?"

"The other! What do you mean? There was no other! You are, dear friend, subject to distractions!"

These words of Archibulus reminded Ctesiphon that he had gone beyond the bounds of prudence. He checked himself, and approaching the child took hold of him by the chin, as if wishing to examine his features more closely.

Then, in quite a natural tone, he said to Archibulus: "This is a subject of congratulation! He is, dear friend, what could be called a charming acquisition that one could envy you. For my part, I regret much my absence from Rome the day of the sale!"

Taking his hand off the slave's chin, probably because the examination had been sufficiently prolonged, he said:

"And thou, young knave, as thy master Archibulus calls thee, how long hast thou been in Rome? Who sold thee to Servilius?"

But the child was not only handsome; from his eyes, lacking all expression of good, there gleamed a singular audacity. He answered:

"Are you my master, that you undertake to question me? He looks like a fool—that man!" added he, re-commencing

to strike with all his strength upon the table, at the same time casting a glance towards his master who, at this last observation following close upon a response already sufficiently impertinent, laughed until he cried.

Ctesiphon pretended not to have understood either the remark or the hilarity of Archibulus, and quietly walked back to his own counter saying, as he went:

"It is one of Selene's sons! there is no mistake! This child has a wicked eye, but it is his mother's own look when she overwhelmed me with her insulting laugh—He is mine, for she was my slave; and I can take possession of him, for he was stolen from me, and stolen articles can neither be sold nor prescribed—consequently—"

But arrived at this point of his argument, Sotades appeared suddenly struck with three objections that presented themselves.

How prove that this child was Selene's son?

How also his having been stolen by Chaerestrate?

How, in fact, establish the identity of Ctesiphon with that of Sotades who had been Selene's master in consequence, by reason of a regular sale made by this same Chaerestrate?

He could find no answer to these three difficulties; but knowing that time is a great and ingenious workman, he confided to its care his hopes of partial or entire relief.

"Had I only Selene and Chaerestrate," he said, "everything would come right!"

But where was Selene? What had become of Chaerestrate? He certainly knew nothing of either at present, and "the other," that is Selene's other son, who could tell what the slave dealer had done with him?

However, the presence of the young slave, who had displayed so much insolence, wrought a notable change in the manners and actions of Ctesiphon. It was then he merited the surname of Nugax, which his associates at the Forum were not tardy in bestowing upon him. He was really seen to pass long hours in contemplation of the young Lupus (it was thus our "argentarius" had styled the child), marvelling at his wonderful precocity for business and his success in attracting clients.

The day when Lupus, having obtained his master's permission to become a "collybistæ," began to work for him-

self, Ctesiphon appeared so enchanted, that really nothing was more ridiculous than his foolish exultation and manner of evincing it. He repeated to everyone that this youth was indeed a prodigy whom Archibulus was happy in possessing; he, himself, would consider his fortune made could he but have the inappreciable luck of putting his hand upon such a treasure. So many and great were his absurd demonstrations for Lupus that, on the death of Archibulus, no one doubted who would be the young slave's purchaser at the sale which the heir proposed to make as soon as he had examined into the testator's affairs. Consequently, it had been determined to excite a formidable competition against Ctesiphon, which would make him pay dear for his bargain.

But to the great surprise of all, our fat banker, though present at the sale, offered no opposition to the bids, and Lupus was adjudged to Fulgentius at a price which the supposed competitor had not inflated one sesteree.

What could have been the cause of such singular self-denial, after so much enthusiasm manifested for the young prodigy?

Several of his fellow members at the Forum said:

"We were right, decidedly, in our conjecture about Ctesiphon; gold pieces do not abound in his chest, and those which by chance find themselves there would be frightened at their own insignificance compared to the young slave's value!"

Others and these, with an affectation of gentleness, said: "Not having succeeded, despite reiterated attempts, to make friends with the wolf cub, he fears its bites."

"Our dear Ctesiphon," added they, "lives on nothing but poetry; but that is not suitable nourishment for the wolf's well-sharpened teeth, eager to feast upon flesh!"

The truth is, that some time before the death of Archibulus, Ctesiphon had suddenly shown a great indifference to his dear little Lupus and very rarely approached him; yet, by means of a cunning patience that was astonishing to himself, he had succeeded in obtaining from the mouth of this insolent, rebellious child a very important piece of information.

Which information was this Lupus had had a brother, but the brother was dead in consequence of a beating administered by Servilius' overseer.

As to the slave dealer, who had brought them to Rome and together sold them to the young patrician, Ctesiphon, notwithstanding all his efforts, could never succeed in getting Lupus to pronounce the name of Chaerestrate. However, Sotades had known enough to feel certain that Ctesiphon was not mistaken in his conjectures, and he accordingly set out on a journey, so long a journey that his fellow bankers feared they would never again see him at his counter. He returned, but appeared to have lost all fancy for the little Lupus, once, and once only, expressing any interest in the young slave's affairs, and that a spirit of vexation at not being able to discover the place where Fulgentius had taken his purchase.

This was the epoch when Ctesiphon, whom Lupus had caused to neglect poetry, replunged into it with delight, declaring he had never before enjoyed such intoxicating joys. It was also the epoch when the coming and going of individuals, making mysterious signs, re-commenced, and when his associates at the Forum thought he would have been fortunate had his money chest increased its dimensions in proportion to his corpulency.

This lasted six or seven years.

One fine morning, hastening as usual to the Forum before any of his fellow bankers, he had just arranged his counter, when a hand, somewhat bold, was laid lightly on his shoulder. Our readers recollect our mentioning this in one of the first chapters; also, that Ctesiphon, on turning round, found himself facing a handsome young man whom, at the instant, he did not recognize. It was, however, his dear little Lupus, but much changed by his long sojourn in Bythinia, from which he had just returned, and the twenty years he now counted.

He had retained, and, perhaps, in a heightened degree, that air of ferocious independence so frightful to Ctesiphon's natural pusillanimity, and our readers recollect how he had shown the timid "mensarius" teeth so white and sharp, when the latter hesitated as to the hundred thousand sestertii asked in favor of Aulus Plautius Lateranus, that this simple menace had immediately dispelled all hesitation.

And now, does anyone wish to know why, on this occasion, Ctesiphon had manifested such violent anger against

the Christians? For two causes at once, both general and particular. The general cause being that singular terror excited in the strongest minds by the supposed mysterious power of a sect before which even the Emperors believed themselves obliged to give way in Rome. It was fear, and fear only, that enkindled these persecutions and demanded the annihilation of the Christians. All the authors of this period teem with passages expressive of these strange apprehensions, exceeding all bounds; and the Apologies of Arnobius, St. Justin, and Tertullian consume less space in defending Christians against the crimes imputed them, than in endeavoring to remove that deep-seated fright which the very name of Christians had excited in the populace as well as among Princes.

Lactantius, in particular, attests that the prudent Diocletian had never persevered in the Edicts, which Galerius twice* snatched from him, had not his own fears been aroused by the burning of his palace at Nicomedia,† and the malicious imputation of this crime to the Christians. Surely, if Diocletian trembled, though wearing the imperial purple, our cautious Ctesiphon must certainly have shivered in the simple envelope of his timid personality.

At the first words of Lupus, intimating the religion of his master's family, Ctesiphon flew into a rage, for he foresaw the end of his particular designs. And these designs, what were they? Poets say that vengeance is a fruit which ripens slowly, inasmuch as its substance is extremely savory, and they have also called it the pleasure of the gods.

But Ctesiphon had made of his something better than a fruit to be tasted hereafter, or a pleasure to charm away the mental weariness of a day—he had converted it into a divinity, a sombre goddess who (so he had lately declared to Carpinatius), appeared out of place except beside the invisible Plutus and reflecting the beams of this blind idol. Ctesiphon wished to hold in his hands Selene and her two children, but, at the same time, he also wished that these hands imposing servitude should be filled with gold, so that, like Tantalus forever bending down to the water and never succeeding in reaching it, his three slaves should always have

*In the year 298, and definitely in the year 302.
†Lactantius de Mort. persec., chap. 10th to 15th.

before their eyes the sight of what might purchase liberty, but never for them!

Ctesiphon would say to Selene:

"Suffer, as I have suffered! Suffer, whilst I enjoy, as I suffered whilst thou didst have pleasure! Dost thou still wish to be put in the balance and sold to him who will give twice thy weight in gold?"

And now it would be his turn to make the air resound with an insulting laugh!

He would say to him who dreamed of becoming a patrician, having just acknowledged that hope:

"Furius! thou art but a serf! Embrace the earth which gave thee to me! she is thy real mother, thou her real son, and I am the master! Aelius Gaurus was the master! Aulus Plautius Lateranus was the master! And I, also, after them, I am the master! Oh! patrician! son of Aelius Gaurus! Selene brought thee forth a serf, and a serf thou wilt always be!"

Unquestionably, Ctesiphon, at the moment Lupus displayed his threatening white teeth, had not yet entirely formed the plan we have given above, but certainly a vague intuition of it had floated through his brain. If, then, Lupus had understood the signification of that vivid satisfaction suddenly illumining Ctesiphon's expanded visage, he, most assuredly, would not have replied, "that Fulgentius, father of Aulus Plautius Lateranus, was he who had so lately possessed that estate in Thrace where Sotades had endured such sufferings"—he would, especially, have guarded against asking Ctesiphon's aid in ruining Aulus; for that purpose, employing our fat "mensarius" as a name lender. These very means, placed at his disposition by the imprudent slave, were precisely those by which Ctesiphon foresaw the possibility of one day rendering himself master of the estate.

He had ceased to occupy his mind with his dear little Lupus, after vainly attempting to reclaim him as a slave stolen by Chaerestrate; but now, Furius, himself, reveals the plan which will fully satiate the hunger and thirst of vengeance. In ten years (so Furius had just said) he would be a patrician; in ten years he would possess all his master's estate; in ten years other young fools would have delivered their names and opulence into his greedy hands!

Yes, doubtless! but in ten years Sotades would reappear; he would snatch from this offspring of the soil the purple band, and, in the name of this soil, would say: "all these lands are mine! all these treasures are mine! thy person is mine!" Thus would Ctesiphon appease two longings of his heart, his thirst for vengeance and his thirst for gold! He would enjoy that pleasure of the gods, the power of crushing with despair those who writhe under their feet!

But ten years! Was it not a very long time?

What matters time to vengeance!

Moreover, during these ten years he will find Selene; he will discover what has become of Chaerestrate. Without Selene, vengeance were incomplete; without Chaerestrate vengeance were impossible.

Chaerestrate alone can produce the decree, declaring Selene a native of this Thracian estate, which Ctesiphon hopes, by all means, to own at some future day; he alone can then, with Ctesiphon, prove, by the aid of an indelible sign stamped upon the merchandise, that Furius is truly Selene's son, and must, in consequence, return to the soil of which he is considered a portion. Besides, this Christian family by whom Furius is owned, and against whom, at this moment, the timid Ctesiphon would undertake naught —it, in ten years, will extend no protection to Furius who, by that time, will have consummated the ruin of Aulus Plautius Lateranus—no, on the contrary, it will rejoice in the insolent, cunning knave's abasement and new servitude!

Only how much to be regretted the other twin's death!

It was in the midst of these vague and charming fancies, and in sentiments of strict adherence to the projects just exposed by Furius, that Ctesiphon grasped the young slave's hand, both parties judging it useless to prolong their conversation, particularly as the other bankers began to arrive at all parts of the Forum.

The individual, expressing the opinion that Ctesiphon Nugax had just been duped by this young man, whose back only was now visible, was no other than that Lupicinus, who, at a later period, learned from the "magister de auctio" his great mistake in not having saluted Plutus, the true god of the Forum, represented by the retired "mensarius."

CHAPTER XI.

A RECOGNITION.

SOME time after the events mentioned in our last chapter, Ctesiphon commenced the habit of going, during his leisure moments, to the Salarian way. This was for the purpose of discovering what passed in the house of Aula Plautia Laterana, hitherto a matter of no consequence, but now claiming his deepest interest.

Indeed, whenever Ctesiphon undertook an affair he never failed to study it thoroughly, and this intrigue with the young Furius was of such a nature that it certainly merited the supreme solicitude of so timid a person as our "mensarius." He did not tell every one his opinion of a house; but still, differing from an illustrious Roman of ancient times,* he was convinced that it must not necessarily be of glass, in order that strangers may acquaint themselves quickly and easily with all its secrets. In this he was not mistaken; for, on a certain day, the house of Aula Plautia Laterana proved to him a source of the most striking surprise that he had ever known.

It was at nightfall, which hour Ctesiphon had selected because the business of the Forum terminated with daylight; and also, because the anxious citizens, having laid aside the various duties calling them abroad since morning, now hastened to regain their dwellings. Placing himself in an obscure corner, a great number of which it would not be at all embarrassing to discover amid these aisles forming the tortuous ways of ancient Rome, dissembling his very best, and watching closely every entrance to the house of Aula Plautia Laterana, he heard the door open softly, and three women immediately appeared on the threshold.

They were thickly veiled, and wore sombre colored garments. All three descended into the street, walking silently and modestly in a direction apparently determined beforehand, as, without the least signal, they turned to the right, followed the Salarian road as far as the "Vicus Salustianus," and soon stopped at a little square, formed by the houses

*M. Livius Drusus.

surrounding an isle or isolated dwelling, of splendid appearance, and better known by the name of "insula Deciorum" (isle or house of the Decia family).

We perceive that Ctesiphon had not hesitated to follow these women. Indeed, taking all necessary precautions, he placed himself upon their track, at a short distance from her who kept a little behind the others; and he noticed exactly the least alley through which they passed. Attracted, we must say, by a vivid curiosity, if one could have heard the words, murmured to himself, whilst playing spy upon these persons, still silently walking before him, and utterly unconscious of his anxiously impertinent attention, no doubt, at intervals, the following might have been collected:

"What means this sallying forth at such an hour? Roman matrons of dignity are not accustomed to go out, and unaccompanied into the streets of Rome at night! Who are these three women? Where are they going?"

However, these reflections of Ctesiphon, or, if you prefer, these self-addressed questions, were not long continued; for, as we have already said, he soon saw the objects of his solicitude stop at a little square deriving its name from the dwelling of the Decia family. In so short a walk, it had been impossible to make out anything concerning these matrons, except that the hair of her who kept a little behind the others was entirely white, a few locks having escaped from beneath her veil, and forming a marked contrast to her dark clothing.

"An old attendant of the two others," said Ctesiphon, noticing this.

And now, the three women having stopped, our "mensarius" perceived, with astonishment, that they united themselves to a compact group of persons, stationed near the door of a shabby-looking house where they were evidently expected, and stood awaiting an entrance, whilst their number was continually increased by the arrivals issuing from every quarter.

What was to be done in such a case, when one's most eager curiosity was mixed, nevertheless, with a certain dose of apprehension, resulting from unexpected, unforeseen circumstances?

Having reflected well, Ctesiphon thought there could certainly be no danger in taking his place among these men and women, whose silent, respectful demeanor seemed to forbode no evil; consequently, without the slightest opposition, he very quietly penetrated into the crowd, endeavoring, as much as possible, to keep near the women he had followed, and who now occupied his thoughts.

When the door of this little house opened, to allow the entrance of those without, he was almost close enough to touch the garments of her whom he had styled the old attendant.

But Ctesiphon soon perceived that no one could be admitted without pronouncing certain words in answer to a question made by a person standing behind the door, and charged with this mysterious introduction. The two matrons passed through, their attendant also, and now it was Ctesiphon's turn.

But he, at this moment, motionless and pale as death, seemed so completely stupified, that those who followed after, struck with the sudden change, gently advised him to retire if he felt indisposed.

Here is what had happened.

Ctesiphon, believing it an easy matter to catch the password from those ahead of him, advanced with the crowd, without one instant losing sight of the old woman upon whose response he particularly depended.

Reaching the threshold immediately after her mistresses, she stopped an instant, and like them lifted her veil, doubtless, that her words, spoken in a very low tone, might be well understood by the interrogator who listened with extreme attention.

Had a flash of lightning struck Ctesiphon, it could not have produced a more sudden and startling effect, than did this simple gesture of an old woman's lifting her veil one second.

For during that second, and whilst bending low at her side to seize the words of response, he caught a glimpse of her face and eyes. In that faded countenance, in those still brilliant eyes, he believed he had recognized the features, the eyes of Selene, although her glances were not fixed upon him!

At the end of a few minutes, Ctesiphon was aroused from his stupor, by a loud laugh at his side.

With the air of a simpleton, he looked at the person thus recalling his bewildered senses, and who, except himself, was now the only one on the little square.

The crowd had, indeed, disappeared within the door, which was now shut upon it.

Again the stranger laughed, and said to Ctesiphon:

"What think you of this treatment of honest citizens, leaving them all alone in the middle of the public way?"

Then, as Ctesiphon made no reply, he continued:

"So you are placed in the same predicament as myself, that is, you are very desirous of studying closely this mysterious worship, but have not the pass-word—nor have I any longer."

"What do you mean? Who are you? What is your business with me?"

To these three questions which in his trouble Ctesiphon, with a frightened air, addressed the stranger, he answered:

"Since it is not agreeable to you, let us say no more about it. I had no intention of making myself disagreeable, and will withdraw. I believed your business in this place similar to my own, and that is why I laughed at our mutual discomfiture, at which you appear much more chagrined than myself. No doubt, another time, I shall succeed better."

"It is chance alone that brings me here, and I assure you, I do not understand you. Of what do you speak?"

"Of the Christians that——"

"The Christians!" exclaimed Ctesiphon, whom this simple word had rendered very attentive. "What! all these people we have seen assembled here, are they Christians?"

"Nothing else. This house, which I know belongs to a certain Sicinius,*[1] is a Christian conventicle. Not far from here in the Viminal, there is still another conventicle, that of Novatus,*[2] and in the Quirinal, that of Pastor.*[3] All

*1, 2, 3.—Under the Bishop Damasus, this house was erected into a basilica. Am. Marc. speaks of it in these terms: Constat in basilica Sicinini, ubi ritus Christiani est conventiculum, &c. (Lib. XXVII, cap. 3.) The conventicle of Novatus, as well as that of Pastor, dated from the earliest era of Christianity in Rome. Novatus and Timotheus had consecrated the baths of their dwelling to these Christian

the northern part of Rome is now infested with these wretches. And we have orders to watch them very closely, because some new plots have been laid. Seeing you as embarrassed as myself concerning their pass-word, I supposed that you were the other party charged with their surveillance.

"No, I have nothing to do with it," replied Ctesiphon. "I am here on my own account, and am very much puzzled, I assure you, at a discovery I have just made, and which was the cause of that surprise you witnessed. Imagine,—but this would not interest you, consequently, it is useless to speak of it. Could you tell me when the 'conventicle' (since this is the name you give these reunions of Christians) breaks up, and if renewed often?"

"There are no fixed days, but I will tell you the means of knowing in advance when one is going to take place. Every time you notice a cross of red or white chalk marked on this door, rest assured, that the same evening will witness an assemblage of Christians in the house. As to the duration of these reunions, it is usually two hours at the least, three at the farthest; but I confess that, having lost my chance to-night, I feel no desire to remain until the end. I will, however, the evening I shall have succeeded in gaining admittance to the place of these dark mysteries."

And the stranger who, as we have seen, was no other than a spy of the Roman police, wishing success to Ctesiphon should he persevere in his intention of remaining till the "conventicle" had adjourned, soon disappeared amidst the great shadows, formed, notwithstanding the public lanterns, by the high walls of an immense library erected on the opposite side of the square.

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reunions: Erant Romæ thermæ Novati in Viminali quæ patuerunt olim Christianis ad sacras synaxes, quæ et Timothinae dictæ reperiuntur, a fratre ejus Timotheo. The Senator Pudens had converted his house into a sanctuary, which Bishop Pius 1st (elected in 142) confided to the care of the Senator's brother Pastor. (Titulus Pastoris.) Upon this very site was afterwards constructed the church of St. Pudentiana, which still exists at Rome. (See for all these details, Baronius in his commentaries on the Roman martyrology, and that of Ado on the days commemorating Sts. Pudens, Novatus, Timotheus, Pudentiana, and Praxedes.) The three churches we have mentioned were not the only ones used by the Christians at this epoch. Eusebius attests (Hist. eccles., Lib. VIII, cap. 2 et 13) that there were about forty. (Optat. Milev. de Donat. Schism.) Gallian restored them to the Bishops of Rome in 260 Diocletian ordered their destruction in the year 303.

Soon after, Ctesiphon retraced the steps he had made in following these three women; and any one aware of his presence, could have perceived him hidden in the obscure corner, he had, at first, selected as the best point of observation upon the dwelling of Aula Plautia Laterana.

He concluded that there was risk of losing sight of them in the crowd, should he wait for them on the square; whilst in his present station, nothing could hinder his seeing them on their return to the house, whence they had started.

In fact, at a certain hour, the sound of footsteps warned Ctesiphon that these women approached, and boldly issuing from his retreat, he advanced before them.

He had carefully concealed his face, and, at every step, staggered as if drunk.

Suddenly he stopped, and the old woman also, uttering a loud cry, for this man had seized her veil, and with a strong hand, held it raised. It was but an instant, yet Ctesiphon had satisfied himself that he was not mistaken.

He had seen her face, he had fixed his eyes on hers, he had heard her voice!

Those features though faded, that look though troubled, that voice despite its emotion, were indeed the features, the glance, the voice of Selene!

"The unhappy being!" murmured Ctesiphon, moving rapidly away, "how changed she is! What sufferings and what anguish!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE HAND OF GOD.

LET us pass over some years, and approach the period when Furius, about to receive his freedom, prepares to settle accounts with the two men who had served him as name-lenders.

During this long space of time, there was no remarkable event in the life of Ctesiphon, except one which shall be related as soon as we have described the permanent effects of the wonderful discovery mentioned in the preceding chapter. This recognition had naturally aroused all that slum-

bering resentment, so long cherished against the unhappy Selene, all those ardors of vengeance he had sworn to satisfy the moment an opportunity offered. Moreover, did it not seem as if the gods were on his side? Was it not certainly by their favor and secret intervention that he, at first, recognized in Furius one of Selene's sons, and then discovered Selene herself, when, after many fruitless researches, he had abandoned the attempt? Was it not also to this same favor he must attribute the wonderful prosperity of Furius, which assured our "mensarius" (at once, both witness and instrument) incredible sums of gold the day he could claim Furius as his slave?

For, in this consoling and radiant perspective opening to his desires, less than ever did Ctesiphon separate gold from vengeance.

"Vengeance is good," said he, to himself, "but it cannot last forever, and certain moralists declare that, if not dangerous in all cases, it is at least naturally sterile. On the contrary, gold, when in fruit, increases, and continually renews the enjoyments of its possessor. That man is protected and respected even, who, in pursuit of vengeance, never loses sight of his interest, but doubles, triples, and sometimes adds tenfold to his opulence."

And Ctesiphon, with the touching solicitude of a future patron, heartily seconded all the business operations of Furius, at the same time carefully noting their results. He admired, as formerly, the young slave's marvellous skill, and delighted in the spectacle of young patricians' engulfing their fortunes in the multiplied abysses these avaricious hands had helped to open.

"When I think," murmured he, from time to time, "that all this will one day be mine, I am truly transported, and wonder if I ought not to sit with folded arms and take my ease."

But he took good care to avoid this inaction.

On one side, the continually increasing number of strangers passing and repassing his counter at the Forum, was a sufficient proof that he had not abandoned his own affairs, but still continued those secret enterprises by which he had already been considerably enriched—on the other side, the accomplishment of his promise to help ruin the son of Aula Plautia Laterana also demanded time and attention.

Had not this powerful matron received Selene? In the day of vengeance, would not she and all these detestable Christians place themselves between him and Selene? Moreover, was not the ruin of Aulus necessary? For Aulus now owned that estate in Thrace, the possession of which would decide the ownership of Selene and Furius.

"Yes, without doubt!" said Ctesiphon, pensively, "but Chaerestrate is wanting, and yet," added he, scarcely daring to speak above a whisper, "why do I not hate these Christians more? Why does the fate of this young man, whose ruin I have helped to bring about, why does it inspire me with a compassion I cannot overcome? Why, indeed, at the very remembrance of that miserable woman named Eva, am I troubled and softened?"

It was, especially, when absorbed in the study of his favorite poets, that these reflections presented themselves. He had already indulged them a long time, in consequence of circumstances which we had not failed to relate, if, on a certain day, when more than usually pre-occupied, he had not been suddenly interrupted by a singular event, which it is particularly necessary for our readers to know.

This memorable day, Ctesiphon was calmly seated at his counter, his eyes vaguely fixed upon an uncertain point in space, when, all at once, there resounded on every side the greatest clamor. He was jostled by frightened bankers who, rushing to their wooden tables, hastily collected the money there displayed, and as hastily deposited it in reserved coffers, or simply dropped it in their tunic pockets well adapted for all emergencies of the sort.

What was the cause of this sudden panic, attacking all the bankers, and Ctesiphon among the number, for he, suddenly aroused from his reverie, followed the example of those around him, and in a few minutes, though without knowing why, he had swept every vestige of metal from his counter? Nothing that could have caused this consternation was visible, except afar off, a whirlwind of persons eagerly pursuing an individual, to whom some hostile divinity must have lent the wings of Mercury, the god of pawnbrokers, and also his winged sandals, so agile were this creature's feet, and so far did his fleet course outstrip that of his most ardent persecutors.

This man, or spectre rather, had suddenly appeared on the Forum, precipitating himself like a fury from one of the rocky ways of the upper Velabrium, and had put to flight everything before him.

Whence did he come?

It was afterwards ascertained, that some young Transtiberians had met him on the Palatine bridge, there talking to himself, gesticulating, laughing aloud, in a word, manifesting unmistakable signs of madness or delirium. No poet had yet pronounced childhood pitiless, but it was none the less so; at Rome, especially, where that truly Christian virtue compassion had taken root only in hearts subdued by the gentleness of a new faith, childhood was still merciless, and never had any one seen a headstrong band of little vagabonds submit its cruel instincts to the unknown laws of tender charity.

Consequently, these young Transtiberians hastened, and, indeed, brought about the events we are going to relate.

The old man—for it was one—hemmed in by this merciless crowd, who, with loud cries, immediately made a circle around him, now suffered all that can possibly be imagined from their ridicule, insulting railleries, outrages, jerks, and even blows, which the most audacious of the little wretches inflicted upon him. These odious attacks added still more to the victim's excitement. Tormented on all sides, what was at first but ordinary insanity, or, perhaps, even a transient derangement, was changed into fury, and these indignities continuing, his transports of rage became such as would baffle all attempt at naming them.

Strange thing! a sort of terror seemed blended with this frightful fury. The old man, who quivering, gnashed his teeth like a wild animal, seemed not to seek revenge. He evidently made desperate efforts, but it was to escape these outrages; he waved his long, bony arms around him, but struck no one, he struggled, but it was to gain a passage through which he might take his flight.

One could have said that the voice of childhood had filled him with dread, and that each cry resounding in his ears, reminded him of others long since heard, and which, demanding vengeance, had pierced the skies.

At a certain moment, he saw the opening which his

bewildering gaze had incessantly sought among the thickening ranks of his aggressors, and though, for a second only, it was enough! With one bound he was already beyond them, and madness lending wings to his feet, he believed himself free from his shameful persecutors. But they would not relinquish so easily the sport offered them by a propitious divinity, and which, during a few short moments, had afforded such an agreeable diversion.

They dart forward in his footsteps, and unable to overtake him, pelt him with stones, and cry out:

"The madman! the madman! the escaped madman!"

Just beyond the Palatine bridge is the "Forum olitorium," or vegetable market, and a little further on the "Forum boarium," or beef market. As clamorous tongues were never lacking in well-provisioned cities, at Rome they were an inseparable accompaniment to the square baskets displaying the savory fruits of happy Etruria, the renowned onions of the light Sabine soil, and the celebrated turnips of Amiternum.

It was, consequently, one tempest of cries when the unhappy being, still pursued by his first assailants, crossed like a phantom the "Forum olitorium," upsetting in his disorderly course, we know not how many baskets, whose owners showering upon him the bruised and scattered contents, devoted him most heartily to the infernal gods.

At the "Forum boarium" it was much worse.

Here, tending those big beeves, whose long horns, often gilded for sacrifices, merited the praise of Virgil, were their vigorous, agile keepers, flourishing whips of cut leather, with which, from their elevated positions, they could reach the indocile cattle, browsing amidst the thick herbage of a Roman pasture. At sight of the old man, in an instant every whip resounded, and loud cries of joy were mingled with the shrieks of terror, wrenched from the unfortunate victim, enveloped in these bloody thongs, which even accelerated, if possible, his furious course.

We know not what would have happened, if some compassionate genius, watching over his steps, had not, on his leaving the "Forum boarium," turned them aside from the "Forum piscarium," where were already heard the mutterings of that storm which the fish-venders had prepared for his reception.

The piles of fish bones and scales heaped up around the marble ponds, were sufficient to have covered him with filth; the large oysters of Brundusium, or Lake Lucrin, had served for missiles harder and sharper than the pebbles of Samnium rocks; and the long eels, or, still worse, the heavy "murenæ," wielded by vigorous hands, had torn his flesh even deeper than the "taurea," beef-hide whips, so much dreaded by slaves, whose piercing screams answered every stroke.

But happily, the sharp declivities of the upper Velabrium and narrow roads leading to them, offered the terrified old creature a retreat from these odious tortures, which, inflicted on the vilest animal, would have awakened pity; but now, when the victim was a human being, half-clad, already covered with blood gushing out of the wounds made by stones and whips, the spectacle excited only transports of joy and clamors of mirth!

And yet, this man responded to these clamors in no other manner than by the most furious leaps; and to these barbarities, only by inarticulate cries of pain and delirium.

On the other side of the upper Velabrium was the great Forum.

Arrested one instant in his course by the impassable mass of the Julia Basilica, the old man precipitated himself into the first path opening on his left, and grazing the temples of Fortune and Saturn, the arch of Tiberius, and Tabularium of the people, suddenly appeared, like a vision of darkness, before the astonished bankers, whose counters, loaded with gold and silver, were ranged all around the base of these grand monuments. By chance, he had found his way into the most opulent quarter of the Forum.

Then, those who, spell-bound, watched this phantom, seemingly pursued by the Furies, saw him suddenly stop, for one short instant, a prey to a strange fascination.

It was a hideous sight!

This old man, motionless, yet agitated and quivering in every nerve, looks about him with haggard, gleaming eyes. His white hair, standing on end, is reddened in places by the blood flowing from a large wound in his forehead, and the shreds of clothing, still hanging to him, are also bloody; he is disgusting with dust and perspiration; his palpitating

chest heaves convulsively, as shrill whistles and coarse cries issue from his frightfully distended mouth.

Why is his body bent forward almost to the ground? Why are his contracted hands beating the air? Why this immobility and, at the same time, this agitation?

Does he still hear the young vagabonds' cries, the vegetable dealers' shrill voices, or the cracks of the cattle tenders' merciless whips?

No, he stops but a second to collect his strength, and with one leap, is on the table glittering most with metal! The owner knocks him over, and both are rolling in the dust.

But, with another bound, he frees himself and rushes to the other counters. He fills his hands with gold and silver, but it is not to retain what has so dazzled his eyes, and charmed his ears. No! he scatters the pieces in the air, he showers them around him! Poor wretch! he is intoxicated with delight! he has forgotten all his woes! With a savage laugh, he leaps from counter to counter; then he begins to dance and turn somersaults! For one minute, he is truly the king of the gods, for, like Jupiter, he is in the midst of a shower of gold, which will increase at his will.

Meanwhile, the bankers, filled with consternation and almost stupified, promptly recover their senses at sight of their gold and silver flying through the air, and picked up by innumerable beggars, running from all sides of the Forum! No time can be lost, their consultations must be short. Then all at once, and in the twinkling of an eye, they cast themselves upon this furious creature, this new species of thief, who succumbs to repeated blows of hands armed with the relics of their broken tables! The whole Forum trembles at their imprecations!

These new tortures awaken in the unhappy wretch that terror which had so lately given him wings. Seeing himself again surrounded by a multitude, whose fury almost equals his own, he resumes his flight, having first knocked down all impeding his passage, and now speeds along the Forum, pursued by the most active of the bankers, and terrified by the deafening tones of the rest.

But, at length, there is an end to the strength which frenzy and fear have so long sustained—exhausted too, by loss of blood, he falls, and rolls like an inert mass near the

counter where Ctesiphon stands anxiously awaiting the end of an event which the tumultuous state of things around have rendered it impossible to comprehend.

At one glance, the "mensarius" recognizes Chaerestrate! Immediately interposing between the latter and those who wish to put an end to this quivering mass of human flesh, he exclaims:

"Do not touch him! I know him, and have charge of him!"

Then making an imperious sign to some friends who were always near his table, he hastens, with their aid, to carry this almost corpse beyond the reach of the infuriated bankers.

It was thus the hand of God conducted to the very feet of Ctesiphon the wretch he had so long sought, and whom, on the morning even of this memorable day, he had abandoned all hope of every finding.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHAT CAN BE MADE A DIVINITY.

CHAERESTRATE, when found on the Palatine bridge by a crowd of young vagabonds, as we have already described, had escaped from the hands of Christian charity. Some months previous, he had arrived in Rome stripped of all resources, too old to engage in any new projects, and already a prey to that derangement of mind which often manifested itself in fits of real madness. Whence had he come? For many years he had incessantly traversed Greece, Asia Minor, the Roman colonies, and various other countries, always in quest of victims for his infamous trade—roaming here and there, like the monsters of the desert, ready to pounce upon all whom the poverty or avidity of parents, isolation, abandonment, improvidence, or similar fatalities delivered a prey to his horrible clutches.

But there are some existences in all ages, objects of particular aversion to the justice of God, and which in ancient times no less than at present, He let feel the strength of

His formidable arm. These were lives that had been devoted to the misery and desolation of others.

Not only had losses of every kind (a punishment too light) overtaken Chaerestrate, but when no longer able to repair them, still greater calamities had stricken his degraded old age. He whom so many mothers could curse, and so many innocent children reproach as the corrupter of their young hearts, had everywhere become an object of horror.

He could find an asylum neither in the cities nor in remote places. As soon as he made his appearance, or at least, in a few days, he was recognized and loaded with outrages, driven off, the inhabitants pursuing him afar as if wishing to deliver themselves forever from some filthy or dangerous animal. Then it was, that already broken by despair and misfortune, the old man's reason began to give way under the accumulated weight of these maledictions.

But at first, his derangement was only at intervals, and without affecting certain faculties, particularly his cunning and calculation.

Thus, when he found it necessary to disappear from the places in which he had always lived, because on every side he heard accusing voices, the very stones in his path seeming to rise up as witnesses against him, he immediately determined to seek refuge at Rome.

It was not only because in this immense city every trace of dishonor, every vestige of reproach attached to his name had been effaced from the minds of men, but also, because he would there find all those who had been the victims of his thirst for gold.

He knew the birth, origin, family, the least particulars concerning the past life of all he had consigned to ruin; and, like the slave dealers of his own and every other epoch (such honorable traditions are never lost), he had not neglected to collect proofs and most carefully preserve these important documents.* To Rome, then, would he go, offering freedom to the courtesan fallen from luxury to ser-

* Most of the pieces of Plautus and Terence are founded upon these recognitions of children carried off from their families and restored by the slave dealers on the payment of a considerable price by the fathers. The Digest and the Code are equally filled with laws destined to render useless or punish frauds which, in such matters, were always practised on a grand scale.

vitude, or menacing with slavery her whom the caprices of fashion had clothed in the vestments of wealth and triumph. For this, nothing was necessary but to prove that the one had been sold him by a free father, and the other he had stolen from a careless or absent master.

What abundant sources of fortune! what magnificent profits could Chaerestrate still promise himself!

He reached Rome furnished with his only remaining treasure, a voluminous collection of manuscripts relating to the unfortunate beings in whom he had formerly trafficked. Among these documents were some concerning Selene, and which had already been used in the successful secret machinations of Aelius Gaurus against Sotades.

But at Rome the hand of God awaited this wretch, and we have just seen how its blows had directed the steps of him whose heart it also wished to change.

What we have not yet heard can be explained in a few words.

An attack of furious insanity having seized Chaerestrate, a few days after his arrival at Rome, he had, in a quarter of the city bordering on the Palatine bridge, been exposed to the outrages of a multitude which everywhere are endowed with the same savage instincts. Perhaps he had succumbed, had not Providence permitted this first scene to take place not far from the dwelling of the humble Christian Rusticus, who was a witness of these indignities.

Rusticus did not hesitate to interpose between the pursuers and their victim, whom, after a well-contested struggle, he had the happiness of rescuing from their excesses. Then, welcoming to his own house this man of whom he knew nothing but the sad fate, he lavished upon him every kindness his condition claimed. This event took place during Agatho's last visit to Rome, and whilst Severian was entrusted to the care of Osius, the venerable Bishop of Cordova.

Agatho, when in Rome, was frequently with Rusticus, a fervent Christian and guardian of Peter's tomb. Thus, he who had corrupted Selene's youth, and he who had reclaimed her to the paths of virtue and religion were, though unknown to each other, re-united under the same roof, Chaerestrate, less crushed by delirium than exalted

by secret despair; Agatho, calm and serene, drawing from the treasures of his soul that gentleness so necessary in his intercourse with the unfortunate being God had thrown in his way.

The holy old man inquired of the stranger neither his name, nor his country, nor his woes; still fearing that these questions, by awakening painful recollections, might again agitate this shattered mind which he endeavored to pacify and soothe. He spoke words of comfort, telling of his own life, the long journeys he had taken, the misery he had solaced, the many troubles he had alleviated, and that the stranger's own sorrows, no doubt the result of great suffering, were not those which would leave him a prey to despair.

Thus, Agatho offered words and deeds of consolation to this unhappy wretch whom he promised not to abandon, and some bright tints in whose future he attempted to depict. Chaerestrate listened to Agatho; he also listened to Rusticus, holding the same language and seconding all the old man's tender care. Little by little, his disordered mind became calm, and when his two benefactors were not at his side, it was his delight to repeat their names, calling them to him and begging them to talk to him. But one day, when other pious duties had called them elsewhere, his delirium gradually returned, and growing more violent, during the prolonged absence of those whose very voices would have calmed it, he abandoned the hospitable roof where Christian charity, whilst contemplating still greater benefits to his mind and heart, had shed her balm over their gaping wounds.

We know how he was greeted on the Palatine bridge; how, after the outrages of the "Forum olitorium," the bloody whips of the "Forum boarium," and the vigorous blows of the infuriated bankers, he had terminated this day's sorrowful course by falling, in a state of exhaustion, on the marble slabs of the Old Shops (sub Veteribus), where Ctesiphon had his counter.

Henceforth, all traces of Chaerestrate were forever lost to Agatho and Rusticus. The "mensarius," having removed him from the Forum, was not long in installing him in the isolated chamber of that dilapidated building we have mentioned. Here his new guardian was the only visitor, the only witness of those frightful night scenes already described

Agatho's charity suffered much at the disappearance of the unhappy being he had hoped to cure; and, when on the point of departure for Spain, he counseled Rusticus to take charge of the documents left in his house by the stranger, to let no one have them except the owner, should Rusticus ever succeed in finding him.

Agatho had no idea of the nature of these documents, no suspicion of their importance. But in his dear solitude he never forgot this mysterious event; more than once, he mentioned it to Severian and, in the letter handed Rusticus by Severian, he inquired if his counsel on this point had been observed, and if, during the space of so many years, there had been any tidings of the unhappy madman.

Meanwhile, Ctesiphon, in lifting Chaerestrate, believed he had hold of a corpse, and, when convinced that life was not extinct, he perceived, at the same time, a strange immobility which had extended to every faculty.

Long days passed, and yet, notwithstanding the efforts of a devotion that would have been touching if inspired by better motives, it was impossible to restore speech to this man, or awaken a single gleam of expression in his glassy gaze.

Gradually, however, this torpid state relaxed; Ctesiphon heard, almost joyfully, the coarse laugh so familiar to Sotades, and, at last, one day, two names which Chaerestrate, murmuring at first in an almost unintelligible manner, afterwards repeated continually:

"Agatho! Rusticus! Rusticus! Agatho!"

But what did they mean, these names wholly unknown to Ctesiphon?

By dint of questioning, he learned that they were the names of those who had received Chaerestrate; also, by taking advantage of every approach to reason of the old man, he discovered that in their hands were the decree and the manuscripts relating to Selene.

For Ctesiphon, with infinite trouble, had succeeded in making himself known to Chaerestrate, and, by speaking to him continually of Sotades, of Selene and her twins, had at last recalled some dim recollection of the transactions that had passed between them.

But it was especially because Ctesiphon was kind to him,

visited him every day, fed him, talked to him, that the poor creature loved to pronounce the name of Sotades; he joined it to those of Agatho and Rusticus, and when not uttering his stupid laugh, he spent entire hours repeating mechanically:

"Agatho! Sotades! Rusticus! Sotades! Sotades! Agatho!"

Ctesiphon despaired.

Do what he would, it was impossible to draw from the old man anything but these monotonous exclamations; never the least word of this idiotic voice could Ctesiphon distinguish that might lead to the discovery of what he so longed to know.

Chaerestrate's insanity had completely changed his character. Excited by the outrages inflicted on him from the Palatine bridge to the Forum, he had become furious, then a state of absolute prostration succeeded, and when arousing somewhat from this in the desolated chamber, he was idiotic. Terror took possession of him and he quivered in every member; the light of day was too strong for his feeble eyes and, to escape its glare, he crawled towards the obscure corner where we saw him crouched—there he remained the whole day, motionless, bent into a heap, laughing to himself, incessantly agitated by convulsive movements. Ctesiphon had at last discovered that only one thing could arouse him from this stupor and restore to him a glimmering of life, of voice, of ideas!

The sight of gold, the sound of gold, still re-animated Chaerestrate, who, bounding at the first gleam of the metal, leaped about the room, exalted by the music of these treasures he hoped to seize and whose yellow gleams were so brilliant, whose tinklings were such penetrating harmony. At such moments the idiot seemed to revive, and one could have said that he was about to speak.

But how often had Sotades not employed this last means? How often had he not repeated the frightful scene we have attempted to describe? And always the same termination. Leaving the idiot, who, exhausted by excitement, rolled an almost lifeless mass at his feet, just as he had on the Forum, Ctesiphon quitted this cursed chamber and descended to the street.

Any one who had descried him now amidst the shades in which he endeavored to conceal himself, would have noticed

that his countenance was gloomy and threatening, and from his mouth escaped vague imprecations. Yet some minutes after, when his rapid steps had brought him opposite Selene's dwelling, where he always hastened on quitting Chaerestrate—he wept, in the silent night he wept bitterly!

Oh! Vengeance! didst thou ever weep?

The tears of humanity have covered thy pedestal and mounted to thine eyes, but those eyes are still gleaming with fury; never has pity moistened them, never has compassion extinguished the torches thy hands are continually waving, to set on fire the hearts of mortals!

But why did Ctesiphon weep? Because Sotades was vanquished.

Sotades had been vanquished by Eva; he had been vanquished by Chaerestrate.

Did Ctesiphon know this? Certainly. How had he become conscious of his defeat? He continued to indulge thoughts of hatred, he still awaited the opportunity of revenge; he believed it, he was sure of it, he dreamed of terrible retaliation, but the frightful divinity in his heart had been broken, and when he felt a renewal of his emotions, it was but the shattered fragments of an idol, agitated by a passing breath.

For a long time Ctesiphon had been a spy upon Eva's least movements. On recognizing Selene, the sight of her white hair had sensibly affected him. Joined to this testimony of her long sorrows, he had seen her sad look, her pallid, faded countenance, telling what she had suffered, the weight of what heavy woes her heart had borne.

But there was another way in which she touched his feelings even more deeply than by her appearance.

This poor old woman, humble, repentant, cheerfully abasing herself before all, devoting herself entirely to works of mercy and peace, was she still the proud Selene? Could any one now recognize her cruel laugh amidst the gentle words she spoke to those who, like herself, had been overcome by affliction? Could he now deem her unfeeling after he had seen her shedding tears like balm over the wounds her hands sought to heal? For in observing Eva, Ctesiphon had made strange discoveries.

The humble Christian had been revealed to him in all the

sublimity, in all the practice of virtues he had never suspected, so that the emotion, awakened at first by the sight of decrepitude and suffering, had gradually been blended with the involuntary respect inspired by sincere, consistent repentance and continued acts of expiation.

But this was not all.

Ctesiphon had been to Thrace, where he still planned means for obtaining possession of the estate he had so coveted, and which was to insure his revenge.

There finding some of the women who had nursed Selene during her long sickness, they told him all that had passed after Sotades had carried off her children. He also discovered that Thrace had become the asylum of Aulus Plautius Lateranus, whose ruin he had caused, and whose mother had received Eva under her roof.

Ctesiphon returned to Rome very pensive. Had he renounced all thoughts of vengeance? No. One cannot so easily renounce a sentiment that his heart has been brooding over for thirty years; besides this, Selene was necessary to his designs against that son of Aelius Gaurus, Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus, whom he continued to hate intensely, and whose treasures he had sworn to possess the day he could extend his hand over the young knave.

And yet Ctesiphon had wished to furnish Aulus the means and occasion of an honorable return to Rome, by there taking public revenge on his former slave—The reader also remembers that Ctesiphon had even written Aulus word that he would soon recover his lost possessions.

What was the meaning of all this! First, that unconsciously the "mensarius" had been softened and his plans transformed. Secondly, that, like a favorable shadow, the virtues of Eva had enveloped the house where she dwelt, receiving the respect of all, and that the mingled sentiment of wrath and fear, with which this Christian family at first inspired Ctesiphon, had given way to the secret desire of repairing the evil he had wrought those protecting Selene.

But more especially did it appear as if God had not disdained to cast a look of pity on this poor man so many years a prey to hatred, and yet, though scarcely conscious of it, practising mercy and compassion.

We have said that Eva had vanquished Sotades, but we also added that Chaerestrate had triumphed over Ctesiphon.

And really, notwithstanding his miserable, heinous motives, had not Ctesiphon been good and kind to the poor idiot? Had he not daily brought him food and drink? Had he not said he would never leave him in this isolated chamber to die of starvation? He who solaces poverty and woe always experiences an unknown something dilating his heart; moreover, those words, referring to the glass of water offered the thirsty poor—and which will never be unrewarded—clothing given the naked, and the remembrance of which God will keep in his mind, had been pronounced in the world.

However, three things still singularly absorbed Ctesiphon's mind and almost threw him back into his former agitations of hatred and revenge, that sometimes were as keen as formerly. The first was the unexpected apparition of that other son of Aelius Gaurus, and whom he had denominated "the beggar," doubtless, to distinguish him from the opulent brother, Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus, though on both he had determined to let fall the weight of an undivided resentment. The second was the abuse that Aulus Plautius Lateranus made of the credit which Sotades' letter had opened for him on the banker Ctesiphon. The third and gravest, was the anxiety caused by the departure of Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus, and the terror inspired by the very name of Galerius, which Carpinatius had mentioned in the interview that our readers recollect.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BEGGAR.

IT was in this frame of mind that Ctesiphon found himself one morning as, taking his usual daily walk, he ascended the hill of the Gardens. Suddenly he was accosted by the "magister de auctio," who, with countenance expressing the most extraordinary stupefaction, came running rapidly towards him.

The "magister," who was intimately acquainted with Ctesiphon, as we may have suspected from the lesson read Lupicinus on the subject of his doubts concerning Ctesi-

phon's fortune, hastened to inform the "mensarius" of an apparently very strange event that had just come under his notice.

"What is the matter?" inquired Ctesiphon, stopping and looking anxiously at the magister.

"You do not know, then?" said the latter.

"I know nothing at all," responded Ctesiphon.

"You do not know! Why, it is very strange, the strangest thing in the world!" exclaimed the magister.

"Well, explain yourself immediately. Again, I ask, what is the matter?"

But, instead of answering, the "magister" looked all around him, like a person seeking to assure himself of something which, though apparently doubtful, he supposes to have taken place. And, indeed, his glances being almost immediately arrested by a particular spot of the thick wall at the base of the hill, in one word, he expressed the vivid satisfaction of having divined correctly:

"There!"

Then, nervously grasping one of Ctesiphon's hands, he said:

"Follow me! Let us go immediately to see if what has been done at the Forum is repeated here; and if the same citizen has signed his exorbitant offer!"

Ctesiphon, without knowing what all this meant, redescended the steps he had already surmounted to reach the summit of the hill, and followed his guide, who conducted him to a large square of gypsum recently spread on the wall and reaching from the ground about as far as the height of a man.

Upon this square was written in big characters:

"T. Calenus, our debtor, is in that situation that his goods are to be sold. We, his creditors, sell his patrimony. Let him who wishes to buy it present himself. The purchaser shall guarantee one fourth to each creditor, that is, he will give twenty-five farthings to whom one hundred are due, and fifty to whom two hundred are due." *

* Literal translation of the terms announcing a sale of goods seized by a debtor, and the very text of which has been transmitted by Theophilus (Institutes Liv. III, Tit. 12). We have not changed it (for reasons very apparent), except in the proportions indicated by this author where, "exempli gratia," we have substituted one hundred for fifty. These announcements, by the creditors and "magister," or syndic given them by the Pretor, were made in the most frequented parts of the city, in celeberrimis quibusque totius urbis locis.

It was not necessary for the "magister" to explain why he had conducted Ctesiphon to this notice, for scarcely had the latter seen and read it than he manifested extreme surprise and vexation; instead of "by Apollo and the Muses," which we know was his usual expression of strong feeling, there escaped from his lips what, at the present day, would be called an oath:

"By all the gods of hell! What wretch is it who wishes to cheat me out of this affair?"

"Well," said the "magister," "do you understand now why I have disturbed your morning walk? This is, indeed, worth the trouble of warning you, is it not? What do you think of it? And it is also written at the Forum, where I saw it just a minute ago, and, doubtless, under every announcement we have made in the usual places throughout the city!"

"It is truly deplorable! Such a fine, delightful house is going to escape from my hands, and the gardens so well planted and flourishing!"

"The example that has been given, and may be repeated, is still more deplorable! Thus the creditors will be paid entirely. What a mockery! And our profit and our combinations so lucrative! Did any one ever see the like?"

"I am astounded at it! Who is this individual that can indulge in so dangerous an innovation? Do you know him, and can he be known?"

"I have not had time to collect the least information. I know no more than you do of this singular personage. All I can say is, that never, until now (and may the gods be praised for it!), has he presented himself at any sale!"

It was not the bill we have translated above that gave rise to these observations exchanged between Ctesiphon and the "magister," but the following simple line and name, probably added during the night:

"I promise a hundred farthings to the creditors.

"SEVERIAN."

This it was that, exciting the "magister's" surprise and indignation, had hastened his steps towards Ctesiphon.

The latter, as he had just remarked, was astounded.

The signature affected him not, for he could not yet suspect that this Severian was the individual he always styled

"the other," or the "beggar," but the act itself, by destroying one of his dearest projects, had vexed him greatly.

It was, indeed, something unheard of, and we shall endeavor to explain matters in as few words as possible.

This T. Calenus, whose effects had just been announced for sale by his creditors, and, in the opinion of all, would doubtless be adjudged to Ctesiphon, had appeared and disappeared like one of those meteors which were often seen to rise above the horizon of Rome and, after dazzling awhile with unusual brilliancy, sink down into those unknown depths where these wandering lights are extinguished.

In other words, T. Calenus had been for two or three years one of the "fastest livers" of these remote times, and his ephemeral existence had assumed the almost inevitable phases experienced by "fast livers" of every period.

Thus, he had consumed at first, and very promptly, a large fortune laboriously amassed by his father; he then sustained himself a short time on credit and loans; but at last, and very recently, he had been forced to the necessity of retiring before the excited crowd of his numberless dupes. However, there still remained to him the house, and that was considerable, not only because of its great value, but also because it was a rare thing for these resolute spendthrifts to save any remnant from the wreck of their patrimony. The father of Calenus had bought this house from an impoverished patrician, and the son had, in part, ruined himself by the marvelous embellishments lavished upon it, so prodigally, as to excite the astonishment of other parvenus richer than himself, and seldom astonished at anything. Our readers have already been made acquainted with the locality, a very desirable one, in the neighborhood of the Vatican field, and, at this period, much sought after by the rich citizens, not only on account of the delightful shade, but the admirable view of Rome and her monuments enhanced the magnificent aspect of the surrounding country.

Here, indeed, within a small radius, were scattered a considerable number of gardens and villas still celebrated. We shall mention, among others, the gardens of Domitius Severus, those of the Petilians, of the Volusians, of the Antonian family of Bassians, the villas of P. Bibulus, of the Cincii, of Quadratus, and those of the freedman M. Calvidie-

nus and Caesonius Severus which we have already mentioned.

The dwelling of T. Calenus was neither a villa so called, nor yet a simple garden; though not so extensive as the house of Bibulus, it was a supremely elegant habitation and a charming retreat for an old man like Ctesiphon, fatigued with business affairs and desirous of enjoying in peace all the fruits of his opulence.

He had often coveted this spot; saying to himself that here his last days would pass much more tranquilly than in the famous Thracian domain, the possession of which would never seriously have entered his brain except for the realization of sinister designs so long brooded over by his ulcerated heart.

Here it would be proper to insert an account of the proceedings that took place at Rome when a citizen fell, like T. Calenus, into what we call bankruptcy or disgrace, between which they made no distinction. The details are well known. The recently discovered texts of Gaius, and particularly those much more ancient ones of Theophilus, leave nothing, or scarcely nothing, to be desired upon this interesting matter. We would also like to show, by an accurate commentary on the above transcribed announcement, how a skillful man, like Ctesiphon, having what is styled the scent of a difficult situation, and possessing the talent of turning it to his own account, could very cheaply install himself in a fine dwelling that had long been the object of his ardent desires, and daily contemplated from a distance with emotions of satisfaction; but it would be too tedious to study closely all these combinations of fraud—moreover, both time and space are wanting for these developments of a law somewhat dry and sufficiently complicated. However, to understand why the "magister" had been so surprised on reading the offer and name affixed to the announcement at the Forum, and Ctesiphon so angry, it will be necessary for our readers to pay some attention to the explanation we give of the two systems entirely opposed —the Roman law and our legislation in forced sales.

Among us, how are the effects of a bankrupt or insolvent person sold? They are all published alike, but distinguished according to their nature, and even divided so as to be

within the reach of all; thus distinguished and divided they are offered to all purchasers who present themselves on the day of the sale. But at Rome it was very different. For reasons useless to mention here, it was forbidden by law to distinguish or divide any individual's patrimony, particularly were he insolvent. Consequently, but one purchaser could acquire it when offered for sale, and the pretor adjudged it to him according to what was called the law of the sale, and expressed, as we have seen, in the last part of the bill.

But see now the almost inevitable result of these principles, and this manner of legally considering the case.

To acquire an entire patrimony, this patrimony reduced, as in the instance we have cited, to one house, but of great value, it was necessary to dispose of a considerable capital in cash, or, if individually impracticable, it must be accomplished by a union of resources, so as to place in common whatever sum the exigency demanded.

But, on the one side, this combination of pecuniary strength was impossible, since there could be but one purchaser; on the other, these creditors, drained by the very failure of their debtor, and being individually incapable of furnishing the necessary money, found themselves at the mercy of any sharp speculator who, at the last moment, came forward to buy. This speculator, who was no other than a fat creditor, but more frequently a stranger—for it was well known how, in advance, to get rid of all those that appeared suspicious—in becoming purchaser, ordinarily offered to pay the creditors twenty-five or thirty per cent. at most. When it chanced that anyone went as high as fifty per cent., and contented himself with a moderate profit, he was considered almost equal to a divinity.

Thus was formed the law of the sale. As we have seen, it took place, by means of an agreement between the interested parties and the accepted purchaser, only a few days before the final assignment by the pretor.*

This agreement, as soon as made, was added to the publication, the first part of which was limited to announcing that a certain citizen's effects were for sale and he who

*Theophilus says that it took place paucis diebus before the adjudication.

wished to purchase them was invited to come forward. No inferior offers could now be taken, but the field was still open to superior ones. The latter, however, were never produced, simply because the creditors, having examined all candidates for the acquisition, had already selected him who guaranteed the greatest dividends.

It seemed utterly impossible that anyone could be so foolish or rash as to promise the creditors full payment. The "magister" had truly affirmed that such a thing was unknown in the Records of the Forum. Yet what appeared impossible had taken place, and Ctesiphon, who could scarcely believe his eyes, read and re-read the two lines containing this startling information.

"He lacks nothing except to offer Calenus all the money expended on the house!" murmured Ctesiphon, regarding the "magister" with an air of distress.

"He! he!" said the person addressed, answering this look, "if the house were sold at its real value, all debts might be paid and there would still remain something to him whose name you have just pronounced."

"Tell me," said Ctesiphon, who understood the insinuation conveyed in these words, "this Severian, whom we do not know, you are going to become acquainted with him, are you not?"

"Certainly, for before the adjudication he is to deposit in my hands the pledge of his promise."

"Well, I expect you to send him to me. I am desirous of knowing if there is no means of treating with him. You are right; even were the creditors to be paid in full, the house would be worth all that; it is too good to let slip out of my hands. It is well situated and pleases me particularly. Every day, at the hour you know, I will be where you know to receive this Severian."

"And suppose he refuses to go?"

"He will not refuse. You say to him that there will be offers superior to those he has made for the house—that will decide him to have an interview with me."

"Very well; be assured your desires shall be complied with."

Thereupon, Ctesiphon and the "magister" parted, the first thanking the second for the useful warning he had

received, and advising the "magister" again not to forget the no less important commission entrusted to his charge.

The place Ctesiphon had selected for the interview with Severian, and there daily awaited his coming, was that dilapidated house into all the mysteries of which we are now initiated, and which was yet to witness scenes as strange as any that have occurred within its walls.

But, greatly to Ctesiphon's disappointment and vexation, Severian did not appear. At last, on the eve of the day fixed upon for the final settlement, hearing footsteps that seemed directed towards the house, Ctesiphon abruptly advanced to the door.

Immediately, he recoiled as if stupefied, exclaiming in an undertone:

"The beggar!"

CHAPTEN XV.

THE MONEY GOD.

"YOU are not mistaken, my brother," smilingly said he who entered. "I am, indeed, a beggar, for I live on very little else than the alms I receive."

"Singular beggar," replied Ctesiphon, "who signs a promise to pay forty thousand pieces of gold * to the creditors of Calenus, and who, doubtless, returns from the Forum where he has furnished the pledge of it."

"Yes, I come from the Forum where the "magister" told me that a citizen, named Ctesiphon, wished to see me and have a conversation on the subject of this offer I have made. Am I, indeed, in the presence of him who desires the interview?"

Ctesiphon made an affirmative gesture, and offering the young man a seat:

"Sit down," said he abruptly.

Then, without another word, he began to take a minute survey of his visitor's person and clothing.

*About a million of francs. The gold piece was worth twenty-five of our francs or nearly.

This clothing consisted simply of a coarse woolen tunic of brown, confined at the waist by a leathern girdle; it was short, reaching only a little below the knee. Strong sandals, still covered with the hair of the animal that had furnished them, ill concealed his naked legs by means of bandelets crossed over each other even to the point where the tunic ceased.

Severian, seated upon the chair Ctesiphon had offered him, astonished the latter by the poverty of his whole exterior; whilst he, himself, was no less astonished at the miserable aspect of the house into which he had been introduced.

His looks, with unfeigned surprise, rested upon the damp, mouldy walls, pieces of which seemed, here and there, ready to detach themselves from the rest of the masonry.

Ctesiphon did not interrupt this examination. It afforded him the best means of studying "the other's" appearance and physiognomy, and had he not carefully arrested every word the moment it rose to his lips, he would certainly have murmured:

"I am not mistaken! This young man is, indeed, as well as Furius, the son of Selene! He is the other twin; it is impossible there could be such a striking resemblance unless they are children of the same parent!"

After a few minutes, Severian's gaze encountered that of the old man, and both, for one instant only, remained silent, each absorbed in his own secret thoughts.

"You appear to be almost as poor as I am," at length said the young man, smiling again, "and the house of Calenus seems no better suited to your indigence than mine."

"And yet you promise a hundred farthings to this spendthrift's creditors. I was more modest, and contented myself with offering them twenty-five. There is the difference between us! The young man with the tunic of a slave, and sandals of goat skin, is, doubtless, more opulent than the old man who owns this dilapidated house! What say you? Am I in error or not?"

"Those for whom I desire this house are poorer than myself, and when they enter there, it must not be by the strength of an injustice!"

"An injustice! What do you mean?"

"There is an injustice in profiting by the distress of others, and paying them only one-fourth of what is due! There is an injustice in taking the house of Calenus at ten thousand pieces of gold, when the very furniture represents more than triple that sum, and the sale of it would realize a considerable amount beyond the miserable price offered the creditors. Charity cannot adapt herself to such combinations of fraud."

"Charity! What is this word?"

"A word that renders the young man, wearing a slave's tunic and goat skin sandals, able to pay forty thousand pieces of gold for the house of Calenus, not for himself, but that it may be a home for two hundred of his sick, famished brothers, perishing in the public ways of Rome."

"Ah! very good! A beggar with beggars! It is just! A brother with brothers! I would not have discerned the word! How singular that this rabble should need one of the most beautiful houses in Rome!"

"The house is vast; it has fine, well-shaded gardens; it is situated in a quarter where the air is pure, and near a spot which is dear to us——"

Here Severian stopped suddenly.

In thought, he alluded to Peter's tomb concealed under the tall herbage of the Vatican field, and a very short distance from the house of Calenus; he feared having gone too far.

"Well, young man," said Ctesiphon, "what prevents you from continuing? It is not customary to stop, when one is on so fine a road. Go on, go on then!"

For some moments, Ctesiphon did not take Severian's words seriously; he almost began to believe that this son of Selene could not be in his right mind, so striking was the contrast between his words of assurance, and his poverty-stricken appearance.

"What!" resumed Ctesiphon, seeing that Severian still spoke not, "you are mute! It is truly a pity! Where were you? Ah! speaking, I believe, of pure air and deep shade. And the marbles? and the statues? and the precious furniture—what will you do with them?"

"It seems to me, I have already said, that these objects of luxury will be sold, and I now add, that the price will

be applied to the purchase of more useful things, such as the sick and needy may desire for the amelioration of their lot. We want nothing more than the shelter of a healthy house, sufficiently large to be comfortable and pleasant for an immense number of these unfortunate beings. Other houses might have offered greater advantages for this purpose, but——"

"But one contents himself with what he can get," said Ctesiphon, in that jeering, ironical tone he had begun to use. "And you say you return from the Forum," he continued, passing to another idea.

"Yes, I had to put things in readiness for to-morrow, for then it is the adjudication will be pronounced."

"And you have, doubtless, furnished the security?"

"No, for a citizen, poor and humble looking as myself, could find no one willing to answer for him."

At this response, Ctesiphon arose, laughing heartily, as was his habit whenever he believed himself on sure ground in an argument, ridding him either of a ridiculous proposition, or an individual equally deserving his utmost contempt.

For one moment, he had feared this beggar; for one moment, he believed that the house of Calenus had escaped him; but, fortunately, it was a vain apprehension; the essential formality of giving security had not been complied with, and would not be, because as the stranger had just acknowledged, no one was willing to pledge himself in favor of so meanly dressed a personage.

Ctesiphon was enchanted, he had conjectured correctly. This son of Selene was only one of those clever speculators who have recourse to every means, even that of disguising themselves under the most wretched appearances, for the advancement of their secret designs; he was simply either a fool, or one of those meddlesome creatures who, in hopes of making thereby a few farthings, entangle and perplex an affair at the last moment—or, better still, perhaps he was one of those vagabonds (so numerous in Rome) of which people rid themselves.

Ctesiphon, rubbing his hands contentedly, and, doubtless, reflecting upon the course to be pursued against this son of Selene, made two or three turns up and down the miserable apartment.

Then stopping immediately opposite his visitor, as if positively determined upon some measures that had just developed themselves:

"Do you know, young man," cried he, placing one hand on Severian's arm, "do you know that you are extraordinarily amusing? I thought myself opposed by a serious rival, and now this rival perceives that he has been indulging a fine dream!"

"A dream! I think not! The house is mine, unless another citizen, before to-morrow, shall have deposited a sum greater than what this writing undeniably proves is now entrusted to the "magister de auctio!"

So saying, Severian lay before Ctesiphon's eyes the authentic proof that the forty thousand pieces of gold had been received two hours previous by the director of public sales at the Forum.

This was truly a sudden blow!

It was now Ctesiphon's turn to perceive that his long cherished hope of possessing the house of Calenus must take its place on the list of vain illusions.

Overwhelmed, he fell back in his seat.

"What is the matter?" asked Severian, quite astonished at the sudden change.

Ctesiphon did not reply.

Scarcely seated, he examined anew, and with extreme attention, the young man before him, yet, at the same time, he seemed plunged in reflection. As he thus gazed upon Severian, with almost motionless eyes, scarcely removing them from his countenance, except to rest, with the same strange fixedness, on the rafters of this miserable-looking room, one could have said that some singular thought had suddenly arisen in his mind, and he silently contemplated the disclosure and its consequences.

"You ask, perhaps," resumed Severian, interpreting the old man's silence and pensive immobility, "how it happens so considerable a sum should pass through these hands, little accustomed, I assure you, to the management of gold?"

"Indeed!" murmured Ctesiphon, hardly aroused from his reverie, and yet beginning to pay some attention to his visitor's words.

"To diminish your apparent regret concerning this affair,

I must first tell you, that at no price would those who gave me the money have allowed you, or any one else, to obtain this house. The ground upon which it is built has been for two centuries the place of execution*—but what matters the reason to you? Had it been necessary to double the sum which has just been deposited, it would have been furnished with equal facility."

"Ah!" said Ctesiphon, suddenly rendered attentive. "So," continued he, after a pause of some instants, "this money is not yours! Would you inform me how you get it?"

"In the name of those who suffer; in the name of all who are needy and forsaken, I know not to whom I speak," exclaimed the young man in a tone of animation, "but the house of Calenus, constructed upon sacred soil, is about to become an asylum for the poor and wretched, a place of repose and consolation for a great number of those whom we call our brothers. Do you intend to dispute this with me? Then prepare yourself for the struggle! Two hundred of Rome's most opulent families are on my side, or, rather, that of the old man whose orders I obey and whose representative I am! And were you Plutus, the Money God, himself, which I cannot think, you would have to give way before what I have just named—Charity!"

Severian uttered these last words with such a charm in his voice, such a sweetly penetrating look, that Ctesiphon could not take offence at the irony; being, moreover, no stranger to the passing events of his day, he now perceived (since the authentic document of the "magister" had removed his first impressions) that this young man was no longer to him but a beggar, he was a Christian, possessing the confidence of the "antistes," or Roman Pontiff, and had, by the latter, been selected to obtain this house of Calenus,

*It results from researches on this historical point, and an abridgement of which can be read in the Ecclesiastical Annals of Cardinal Baronius (vol. 1st, page 663 to 665), that the reversed cross to which Peter died attached, was erected at the extremity of the Janiculum, and in that part where it inclines to meet the Vatican field. By the pious care of the priest Marcellus, this cross was interred in the Vatican field very near the Aurelian way and a temple of Apollo. The place of sepulture, and that of execution, were then different, and in all the old plans of the city, which have been restored by savants, the house of Calenus is indicated as having been built on the very spot where St. Peter suffered martyrdom.

where these Christians would establish what they called an "hospitium," as they had already done in various quarters of the city. Evidently, Ctesiphon must succumb, for the contest would be in vain.

Such was his conclusion mentally, and despite his apparent calmness, he fixed his eyes upon Selene's son with such an expression of sullen anger and concentrated hatred, that Severian rose and prepared to leave the irritated old man.

But the latter darting towards him, and seizing him by the arm, exclaimed:

"Stop! the house of Calenus is not the only question to be settled between us!"

And immediately added:

"It was but two months ago you appeared in Rome. Who made you acquainted with Aula Plautia Laterana, the matron with whom you found an asylum on your arrival?"

"How do you know?" asked Severian, very much astonished at this unexpected piece of information.

"How do I know it? I am he to whom you spoke the night you were seeking the house—you asked me to direct you there."

"Ah!" said Severian, attentively regarding the old man, and endeavoring to discover some resemblance between his features and those of what he had taken for a madman.

But Severian could recall nothing, except the singular exclamation, "the other! the other! the other!" repeated in terror by this man as he fled.

Then connecting rapidly in his mind this circumstance, and the question concerning the house which had received him, he concluded that his interrogator was one of those numerous spies with whom, at this period, every Christian dwelling was continually invested—that this spy has supposed him an accomplice in some assumed intrigue of the Christians, and that he would say no more about Aula Plautia Laterana than was necessary to shield this matron against an accusation more or less perfidious and dangerous. Consequently, in hopes of removing any shadow of suspicion resting on this noble lady, he resolved to tell whence he had just arrived the evening he had accosted Ctesiphon, and also who had recommended him to seek the protection of Aula Plautia Laterana's roof.

"The evening you saw me," said Severian, after an instant's reflection, "I, who had been a stranger to Rome since my infancy, I arrived from Thrace——"

"From Thrace!" exclaimed Ctesiphon, drawing still nearer the young man.

"Yes, from Thrace, where I went as the envoy of an old man named Agatho——"

"Agatho! Do you know Agatho?" cried Ctesiphon anew, and trembling with an emotion which Severian could not comprehend.

"As the son knows the father who raised him," said the latter.

"And do you also know any one called Rusticus?" inquired the old man, not less eagerly.

"Rusticus, I am now staying with him, very near the house of Calenus which you wanted to see me about."

"The gods, then, are just!" simply replied Ctesiphon, whose countenance, hitherto gloomy and scowling, was now irradiated with joy.

Overwhelmed by the sudden feelings that had just taken possession of his whole being, apparently exhausted, he fell back in the seat he had so lately left.

Severian looked at him with mingled surprise and compassion, for he believed the old man evidently seized by some sudden indisposition, and advanced to his assistance. But Ctesiphon, with one glance, arrested his steps.

At this moment, amidst the profound silence reigning in the place, was heard a strange dull noise from one of the upper stories. Gradually penetrating the disjointed boards of the floors and crevices of the walls to where these two men were, it sounded like a continual rubbing, as of some one dragging himself along the floor, whilst, at the same time, there was an incessant rattling like that of fleshless bones knocking together. Vague lamentations or piercing cries mingled with stupid bursts of laughter, sometimes drowned these faint noises from above, which frequently ceased but to begin anew.

Severian, astonished, had raised his eyes and listened in silence. Lowering them one instant during a pause in these sounds, he saw that Ctesiphon was beside him.

The old man's features had resumed a singular animation, and his gaze was steady.

"Above there," said he, "is one of those abandoned wretches for whom you destine the house of Calenus. You must see this suffering brother. Follow me!"

And he darted out of the room to the staircase.

Severian followed.

CHAPTER XVI.

CHARITY.

WHEN the door of this wretched chamber was opened, it disclosed the idiot crouched in the obscure corner, where we have already seen him. Startled by the noise of footsteps, he had ceased crawling, and now, fearful and troubled as usual, he awaited those who were to enter.

Ctesiphon's first act on entering was to light the smoking lamp, for it was almost night; he then ran to the idiot, who, not recognising him, screamed, and drew nearer to the wall, as if trying to bury himself within it, but Ctesiphon, with a strong hand, drew him forth and placed him in the middle of the room, just opposite Severian. Then lifting the long white hair completely concealing the idiot's features,

"Look at this wretch," said he to the young man, "dost thou know him?"

Severian trembled.

However, it was neither at Ctesiphon's irritated accent, nor his manner of speaking, suddenly become very rough, but at a long and ineffaceable recollection of childhood thus rendered living and present to his eyes.

"Chaerestrate!" cried he, with more compassion for the pitiable state of this miserable creature than anxiety concerning that of Ctesiphon.

It would be difficult, indeed, to depict the confused expression of Ctesiphon's countenance. His teeth were locked, and his lips scornful; his whole frame quivered, and his hand held firmly the arm of Severian which he had seized; his face was marked with livid tints, effaced in a second by flushes of red equally fugitive; his glance was hard and implacable, yet it felt abased before the serenity of him whom great astonishment had not succeeded in robbing of his usual gentle calmness.

"So, thou recognizest him," said Ctesiphon at last, in a hoarse and trembling tone. "Is he, indeed, the man whose slave thou wert for five years, and who at the end of that time sold thee at the Roman market?"

"Yes," answered Severian, "but permit me in turn to ask you one question; he sold my brother with me, what has become of him, do you know him?"

"The day is not far distant when I shall answer that question. Meanwhile, bow thy head before thy master!"

And saying this, his clenched hand abandoned the young man's arm to place itself on his locks, according to the mode at Rome of taking possession of a slave.

"Thou art mine, yes, thou art truly mine, and for ever," cried Ctesiphon, becoming more and more excited. "Thou art the son of a slave whom this man sold me and afterwards stole from me! Thou art a serf of an estate I possess in Thrace! Thou belongest to me by a double title and double chain, and if thou doubted it, the manuscripts this wretch left with Rusticus, whom thou hast just named, and whose dwelling thou hast just indicated, will prove it to all! Oh! yes, thou art mine, truly mine, mine forever!"

"If I am yours," said Severian, with a sweetness which at such a moment could not but awaken Ctesiphon's surprise, "I have no intention of disputing the possession of my person, nor of robbing you by flight.—In an instant I will conduct you myself to the house of Rusticus; if the deeds you mention, which have indeed been left there by this poor creature, prove me your slave and your serf, I shall return to you, and submit to the fate you impose upon me. But pray let us first help this unfortunate being."

The condition of the miserable idiot had really become (probably in consequence of what had just passed before his eyes) more lamentable and frightful than even Ctesiphon had ever witnessed.

The idiot, the moment Ctesiphon's hand was removed to place itself upon Severian, had rolled on the floor, where now in the middle of the chamber he lay a prey to a most violent attack of his hideous malady.

All his members, twisted and bent by that secret strength which contracted every nerve, were agitated with odious con-

vulsions; his mouth, covered with foam, gave vent to dull, inarticulate moans, coming from a breast rent with anguish:

Severian knelt beside this old man and tenderly endeavored to soothe him. With one hand he had raised the poor creature's head, so as to prevent its incessant beating against the floor, and with the other, as soon as he had wiped the froth from his mouth, he gently pacified the violent fits torturing the miserable frame and bending it double. Nor during these moments was his voice inactive; he had sweet words which he sought to pour like a balm of ineffable consolation on this troubled mind and heart.

No son could have succored his own father more tenderly, or have shed over his sufferings more abundant tears, and yet it was not a father Severian held in his arms, but the man that had sold him in childhood to the patrician whose overseer was charged with beating the little slave to death.

Ctesiphon, a witness of this touching spectacle, silently regarded the young man, and was evidently moved, for his countenance had lost its expression of implacable resolution; his feelings, apparently, were akin to those arising from a long contemplation of Eva's sufferings and repentance. When the idiot, still in Severian's arms, had become somewhat calmed, the latter (as if Ctesiphon only a few minutes before had not menaced him with a double servitude) turned towards our "mensarius," saying:

"You have taken care of this unhappy being a long time, a very long time, for it was during my father Agatho's last visit to Rome—— that he escaped from the house of Rusticus which had received him."

"Chaerestrate was necessary to me," abruptly answered Ctesiphon, "I retained him for my own designs and for the proof which I must give."

"I do not know these designs, and it is not necessary for me to know whether they are good or bad; but I must praise your heart; everyone had turned against this infirm, old man to whom you alone gave an asylum and support. Compassion towards suffering is something noble, and he who exercises mercy must be honored, whatever may have been the motive inspiring it."

"It is singular that you address me in this language,"

said Ctesiphon, in a softened tone. "Have you already forgotten the fate with which I just now threatened you?"

"Do you then think this could be anything terrible to me? There is no purple mantle to be stripped from my shoulders; I am now clothed in the garments you would give to your slave. Slave or serf, I would still be only what I have been and always wish to be. In Thrace, I have lived among the colonists, and there is not one of them whose poverty I have not shared; since my arrival in Rome, I have sought only the humble, the suffering, the slave. I shall gain by becoming one of them. You would not hinder me from doing as I have hitherto done; the hardest master does not find fault with the kindnesses bestowed on those depending upon him, and to the recipients these acts of mercy would taste sweeter from a brother in affliction and servitude. You can extend over me an arm the most rigorous. I shall not repulse it. Afar from being humbled, I shall be exalted. My body will perhaps be a little more oppressed, but my soul will expand, and when the soul is free, the rest matters not."

Ctesiphon began to perceive that this young man was beyond his reach, and that the consummation of vengeance would not bestow the delight he had anticipated. There was, moreover, so great an elevation in the simple words he had just heard, borrowing, too, an especial power from the present moment, that instead of answering, he preferred passing on to certain questions which would satisfy his curiosity, and dissipate the new sentiments gradually gaining possession of him. Addressing himself to Severian, and pointing to the old man's inert body, which the young man, still kneeling, continued to sustain with a touching solicitude, he said:

"What became of you after this man sold you? For a long time I was persuaded of your death."

"The old man whom I have just named, Agatho, restored me to life; lifting me from the place where I lay bloody and fainting, he reanimated me in his arms. God had conducted his steps towards me and given me a father. In Spain I lived with him in a profound solitude, which I did not quit until three years ago, when I assumed his place in the noble works of charity and devotion to suffering humanity, duties often painful, and now impossible for him to perform on

account of his advanced age. From Agatho I learned to bless God, to love mankind as brothers, to pardon them the wrongs inflicted on myself and others, to do good to them, to succor and comfort them, to teach them the true law, and show them that in every affliction, in every trouble, there are still joys and consolations God has reserved for those who believe His promises, who foresee His salvation. From Agatho I learned to crush under foot all the miserable vanities that captivate men's hearts, to make choice of poverty rather than opulence, of humiliations instead of grandeur, of tears instead of sterile joys, of privations instead of luxuries, of all that the world holds in contempt and derision rather than what it exalts. I am, thanks to his holy instructions, ready for disdain, for injuries, for afflictions, for harsh usage, for servitude, for death, even! During the three years I have endeavored, after the example of my father, to conform my life to these maxims, I know not how often in the various countries I have traversed, in presence of all I have witnessed, I have felt how truly he had said that in sufferings would be found true happiness, in affronts glory, in abandonment strength, in slavery power, and in death triumph!"

"And the house of Calenus, do you still think of it? You a slave, who then would dispute its possession?"

This remembrance of a very recent disappointment, and ill-effaced vexation, traversing Ctesiphon's troubled mind, and awakening a last hope, revived the desire of rendering himself master of the only being who, in Ctesiphon's opinion, destroyed all his dreams of a peaceful retreat and indolent repose, under the shadow of the magnificent trees belonging to this charming dwelling.

Severian, at this new question, proving again that the half extinguished passions were re-lighted by the concealed ardors of egotism and latent fires of secret cupidity, for an instant regarded the old man, whose malicious feelings, already shaken, were penetrated by this sweet look, which beamed with the ineffable rays of a divine serenity. Then assisting the poor idiot, who had been struggling for some moments, to resume his usual position, he stood near, ready to lend again the aid of his youthful arm, should it be necessary.

Chaerestrate was crouched in the corner which generally served as his retreat, but he was turned towards Ctesiphon, doubtless because the familiar countenance and voice had particularly attracted his attention. With wild and staring eyes, he gazed upon this face. In this position, one could have said, he knelt a trembling suppliant for some petition; for his convulsive movements had commenced anew, and the coarse laugh had given place to a sorrowful sigh, which issued from his mouth with a remnant of froth. Perhaps God had directed the idiot's attitude, so that Ctesiphon's heart, already touched, should be completely softened; perhaps the old man's plaintive moan was but a prayer, imploring likewise the favor of Him whose helping hand had just been stretched out to assist him.

Severian, very much effected, pointed to Chaerestrate, and then in a sweet voice answered Ctesiphon's question:

"Behold one of those who, after me, will continue to dispute with you the house of Calenus! I, myself, am nothing but an instrument; should I disappear, another would replace me. These alone will always remain, and always henceforth will their cries of poverty and suffering be heard. This day, in Rome, there are innumerable hearts opened to gentleness and compassion,—what signifies one heart more or less? Charity has begun her work, this work she will finish. She is vigilant, and will always be ready for the poor; her hands filled with gold will shed upon them benefits far superior to those of opulence or prodigality. Do not combat her, you will be vanquished. You have been good to this poor creature, but you were alone. Charity has a hundred arms, what man cannot do, she accomplishes, and with that sweet smile which God has given her. The hand of Christian widows is strong to relieve such sufferings as those of this unfortunate being, and the hand of Christian virgins, gentle to bleeding, smarting wounds. Let me have this old man, that I may deliver him to Charity. I will return immediately, and together we will go to Rusticus, and if you are my master, I will not tear myself away from your power."

Then he whom Chaerestrate had once sold, stooping over him, and lifting him with infinite tenderness in his arms, placed him upon his shoulders.

Ctesiphon, at this termination of such a scene, gave vent to a tearful cry, and darting out of the chamber, disappeared in the shades of the staircase.

Severian immediately followed, soothing with gentle words the terrified old man, still quivering in his arms.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE HEIR OF A GREAT NAME.

AT this epoch, there was, in the city already decorated with the title of "the Eternal City," * though confessed, at the same time, that on every side she was gradually becoming enfeebled,—there was, we say, a courtesan very much in vogue under the somewhat pretentious but fashionable name of Staphyla. She formed a part of those greedy groups which, every hour of the day, besieged the money changers' tables at the Forum, and were formerly compared by Plautus to swarms of flies in dog-days, with this difference, however, said he, they are less numerous and less importunate than the flies.† The people, who have always enjoyed the privilege of plain, unvarnished qualifications, gave them the expressive name, "Scorta;"‡ but among better educated persons the softened appellation "little women," or "mulierculæ," was used, doubtless, to afford one more proof that there is nothing new under the sun, not even the "demi-monde," which the present age flatters itself to have discovered, when, with the harshness of his African words, Tertullian had already mentioned it in his curious treatise on "The ornaments of women." §

This Staphyla, then, far beyond all others of her class, was the object of infatuation or, we should say, of vanity which, in default of other feelings, inflated the hearts of the patrician youths abounding in Rome and reveling in idleness.

We must, without going too far on so delicate a subject, give some idea of the life awaiting Selene in the capital of

*Decora urbis eternæ. (Amm. Marcell. Lib. XVI, cap. 10; XIV, cap. 6.)
†Truculentus, Act. 1, sc. 1, vers. 45.
‡Scorta, sunt dura coria. (Donatus, ad Ter. Eunuch, III, 1, 34.)
§Lib. II, cap. 4.

the world had she there enjoyed the existence for which Mygdon had prepared her infancy; we must also depict the state of society at this period, the morals of these last descendants of the grand Roman race, when not regulated by Christianity's divine precepts.

Staphyla did not, like those of her class at the present day, live in a splendid mansion situated in one of the finest quarters of the city; every time she appeared on gala days, or at plays, on the porticoes, at the Coliseum or Circus, she issued from an ignoble habitation placed in the centre of an infected, polluted way.

But nothing equalled her elegant clothing, the rich jewels that decorated her charming person, the sumptuous litter upon which, languidly extended, she was borne along by two ambling mules, one supporting the front, the other the back shaft of this fashionable vehicle. A tunic of saffron colored silk, confined at the waist by a silken girdle sometimes blue and sometimes red, enveloped her in its floating folds; gloves, "manicæ," of soft, fine skin covered her hands and at the wrists were attached to the wide sleeves of her robe; her head was bare and crowned, like that of the goddess Ceres, with light ears of corn artistically arranged, and intermingled either with bluebottles or vulgar wild poppies, according to the color of her sack, and casting a softened tint or glaring reflection on her rich mass of black, wavy hair raised off her forehead in the shape of a threatening military casket.

A fat, thick-set man, well known at Rome under the name of Tranion, walked heavily beside the litter and stimulated, with a knotty stick, the mules' measured pace. This man, sole escort to the young woman surrounded by this magnificence of a few hours, went always directly ahead of her, singing between his teeth and appearing to see nothing. Yet his oblique eyes, rolling in their orbits with unequalled activity, had a feverish attention for every incident of the route, so that the murmured refrain of his quivering voice was sometimes a note full of joy, sometimes a menace which immediately made Staphyla's trembling body bend almost double. She, indeed, appeared accessible to no feeling but that of fear. Her countenance, incomparably fine, wore a morbid, sorrowful expression; her attitude was that of the

divinity reclining on a funeral urn; no feature revealed the least sign of emotion; an almost imperceptible shudder, which she attempted to conceal, agitated all her limbs, and ran like a chill to their utmost extremities.

It is thus, upon Staphyla's promenade depended, for her, long hours of nameless misery or a few days of luxury and splendor.

The reader has doubtless perceived that she did not belong to herself.

She was the property of this coarse man walking beside her litter and, whilst awaiting some stroke of good luck, making the mules bear the weight of his deceptions. Yes, Staphyla belonged to Tranion, and there was nothing in all her clothing and decorations which did not belong to him, even the ear of corn trembling on her brow beneath a breath of wind, and the purple thong attaching to her limbs the flexible sandals. But being owned by Tranion was not all—beside him, and worse still, was Phronesie!

Phronesie! an old woman inhabiting the squalid dwelling where Staphyla returned when the pomp and elegance of her promenade were over. Then, at a sign from Tranion, Phronesie greeted her with the following little speech which shall cause us no farther trouble than that of the translation:

"Come, approach, good for nothing creature, too dearly nourished, too dearly bought, who hast never had an idea of doing well, and from whom there is no profit to be derived except in this way (she slaps her). I never saw a she-ass so inured to blows! You may beat her and with less harm to her than yourself. It is death to leathern whips!"*

And Staphyla, despoiled of her silken tunic and all her magnificent jewelry, stagnated for some days amidst this mire, this moral filth, these miseries described by Terence,† but which delicacy forbids us to reproduce here.

On the contrary, if Tranion's visage wore one of those hideous smiles which too often (we must recollect it) he brought back after these excursions through the city with Staphyla, oh! then her treatment and reception were quite different! She became Phronesie's sweet honey, her cunning little gipsy, her nectar, her dove, her pretty sparrow,

* Plautus, Pseudolus, Act. 1, sc. 2, vers. 130.
† Eunuchus, Act. V, sc. 4.

her dear cat, the great happiness and hope of her old days. Phronesie held herself in readiness, like the fowler who has has prepared his soil and scattered the grain to attract its prey.* The prey enticed, it was wonderful to see how this shameless old woman succeeded in making it bite well at the bait or prevented its escape. There was question of everything in the compact between the young fool ensnared and Phronesie's tender wiles. The house, this damp, filthy hole, was the soil upon which she presented, one after another, every reason capable of working upon compassionate souls or feeling hearts.

Staphyla! so charming a child in this poor dwelling! And what poverty! The baker was merciless, the tavern keeper a heartless man, the Greeks, usurers without entrails, the jewelers, the perfumers, the venders of fans and little chests, the sandal merchant, the commission brokers and so many others, legions of vultures! Then came the maids so thirsty for fat profits, the cook so lying, rapacious and gluttonous, friends and counsellors so greedy and unreliable, the little dog who consumed so many pastry rings, and Tranion himself, Tranion who had a big stick which he well knew how to use upon Staphyla, and even Phronesie, when he was displeased! †

The result was that Staphyla, bought with money for a few hours, days, or a month (never longer, for it was important the frequent renewal of these profitable bargains), in rags, abandoned this squallid dwelling where, on a fixed day, she would return with clothing more splendid than we have seen her wear, jewels more costly, and, especially, a much greater sum of money than had been paid for her. Yes, she must bring back to her masters these new spoils snatched from the dupes of her intrigues and from her friends, or beware of Tranion's knotty stick and Phronesie's hooked nails!

In leaving this abominable place, did not Staphyla meet elsewhere some few enjoyments which, though not consoling her misery, at least made a little diversion and caused a slight forgetfulness of the past?

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*Plautus, Asinarius, Act. 1, sc 3.

†All these details are copied from a letter in Plautus and Terence. See, among others, Asinarius, Act. 1, sc. 3; Trinummus, Act. II, sc. 1.

Let the reader, who wishes, go into one of our museums, place himself before a celebrated * picture representing a revel which is about to end, because neither body nor soul can support it longer, let him study these victims of intemperance and nameless vices, and he can answer this question himself.

He will know, then, why Staphyla appeared so heart-broken on her journey through Rome in quest of these vile animals, why her glance was duller, her body more agitated, her whole frame more enfeebled when she returned to the filthy hole where Phronesie awaited her.

And behold in what bottomless gulfs was swallowed up all the gold of the world, in what iniquities these last of the Romans wallowed!

But also what youths! and what men! To form an idea of them, let us simply translate what can be translated in an author whose pencil is not that of Tacitus, and who, consequently, will not be suspected of exaggeration.

"The majority deny the existence of a God, and yet put so great faith in the ephemeris that, without scrupulously consulting these, they would not take a meal, or leave their houses to go to the baths! Science is regarded as a poison; wise men as useless beings of ill omen. Nomenclators are enjoined to reject them from the lists of feasts and substitute in their place ignoble parasites without the least instruction.

"There are some of these folks, however, who willingly read Juvenal and Marius Maximus.† Why? We know not too much of them.

"The pride of high sounding names, expressing nobility, has inflated all hearts to an extraordinary degree. One speaks of nothing but his possessions, his revenue, his forests, his husbandry. To hear this one boast of his ancestors' exploits, to see his air of a conqueror assumed upon an ordinary honor, would it not be said that he was M. Marcellus in person returned from the taking of Syracuse?

"There are even some of them well convinced that their travels have exceeded those of Alexander the Great. Poor men! they have visited a distant estate whence they have

*"The Romans during the Decline;" picture painted by M. Couture, and really in the Luxemberg museum.

†It is not known who this author was.

returned without fatigue, or have, in a great boat, made the tour of lake Avernus, or, choosing a fine day, have sailed towards Gaeta or Puzzoli!

"All these heroes of grand military achievements, these captors of cities, these slayers of thousands of enemies, never had any other army than their packs of footmen, their crowds of cooks and scullions. But on appearing in public they dispose these attendants after the manner of an experienced general, the heavy phalanges in front, then the light recruits, and lastly the reserves.

"Also grand charioteers, with the necessary gravity required in judging the powers of a horse and skill of a driver.

"Retired gluttons, a prey to all the appetites of stomachs ruined by good cheer, with scales to find the exact weight of a dormouse, a fowl, a fish, and attended by a notary inscribing these differences on his tablets.

"Determined bachelors, having a horror of marriage and considering woman a mere machine.

"Tender friends, who anxiously send to inquire for a sick friend, but who, fearful of contracting the disease, will have no intercourse with the returned messenger until he has purified himself by the bath.

"Masters of unparalleled humanity, who give three hundred blows of the whip to a slave for letting warm water become cooled.

"To be brief, thieves and robbers, atheists, the superstitious, those without conscience, without friends, without families, given up to all shameless deeds, pale from vice, idiotic from revels, stupefied by intemperance, scarcely steady enough to carry the weight of their jewels; succumbing to idleness, ignorant, disdainful of all merit, affecting, however, the gravity of the ancients, vain, loquacious, and finishing by erecting to themselves a brazen statue so as to commend their names to posterity." *

Alas! Aulus could not be separated from this multitude; he had even become one of its heroes! In the Circus Maximus, he had appeared somewhat himself by chastising the audacious creature who had dared aspire to Aula's hand and

*In this picture we have condensed all the sketches contained in two long chapters of Amm. Marcel. Lib. XIV, cap. 6, et Lib XXVIII, cap. 4.

driving back the slave into that nothingness from which he had escaped. But this was only the last ebullition of his patrician blood, the last relic of the master's pride!

Aula and her mother had clearly seen that Aulus was not restored to them.

At first, he blushed at the thought of accepting the advances promised in Sotades' letter; he was shocked at the idea of calling upon Ctesiphon. But he met Staphyla; she was all the fashion; young folks ruined themselves for her; Aulus did not wish to remain behind these triumphing, jeering friends who knew his ruin and hectored his distress.

His ruin! Had he not been written to that he was richer than ever and would soon recover all his possessions? It was not Aulus, then, who presented himself to Ctesiphon, it was Tranion. And oh! such revels at which Rome, not easily terrified, was, at least, astonished!

Ctesiphon paid; he paid a long time. At last, one day, he said to Tranion:

"It is enough!"

This was the very day that Severian had borne off Chaerestrate upon his shoulders; and, perhaps, then it was Ctesiphon had said it would be better to reserve for charity the money spent in vice and iniquity: Tranion returned with clumsy step to Phronesie and told her she must drive Aulus away. Staphyla wept a little, and Phronesie beat her because she wept.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CHRISTIAN VIRGINS.

MEANWHILE, the tempest groaned afar off and sinister rumors had, for some time, been vaguely floating through Rome. Pagans and Christians were equally on their guard, like two adversaries about to engage in a final contest, the issue of which was unknown to either. However, a different feeling pervaded each side. If the Empire was to succumb it would not be until it had caused torrents of Christian blood to flow. If the latter remained conquerors, it would only be to pardon after having suffered much, and to extend the hand to their executioners.

In our days we cannot well understand what took place at the approach of a persecution in the Church when an accursed wind had wafted the news to every quarter of the Roman world. From that very instant society appeared rent in twain, each side presenting a marked contrast to the other, one frantic with a cruel joy, the other filled with sadness and fear. The joy of the one party was that of being able, at last, to cast themselves upon the Christians; the sadness of the other, nature's involuntary shudder at the thought of severe trial; and the fear, it was that of failure in the hour of glory, failure for themselves or some of the faithful.

Nobly have the martyrs acted in the face of tortures and death; but, before martyrdom, they were men, and men do not accept, without a thrill, the necessity of sufferings, the certainty of peril. The Church, herself, who, suspending her palms above the scaffolds and funeral piles, said to her children: "Suffer, and be strong," also showed them ways of escape still open, and cried out to them: "Fly!"

Consequently, on the first alarm of persecution, the menaced Christians, if not seeking safety in flight, at least buried themselves more securely in the recesses of their dwellings, avoided all conversation, all intercourse, with strangers, in a word, took every precaution advised, and even recommended, by the prudence of their pastors. But, on the other hand, the attention of their enemies was redoubled, they were watched on all sides, their houses and places of prayer surrounded, spies were multiplied, an account kept of their least actions, so that, the moment arrived, there could be no delay in designating the victims, or bringing to light the records prepared against them.

For a long time had the pagans experienced no such joys, the Christians no such anguish.

Since the reign of Decius there had scarcely been a real persecution in Rome.

Valerian had promulgated his bloody edicts, but he had fallen into the hands of Sapor, the Persian King, and, before this grand example of Divine justice, his fellow-men dared persevere no longer in such rigors which could be punished by other calamities.

Aurelian, forgetful (as Lactantius says) of his predeces-

sor's crime and chastisement, feared not to sport anew with the wrath of God; but, immediately, the weight of that formidable hand was upon him, and his assassination, by his own friends, delivered the Church from his fury.

Dioeletian, not less malicious and cruel than the most odious among all the persecutors, was the most timid, the most prudent, and, during the fourteen years of his reign, he had not yet dared to begin the conflict.

But his colleague, Maximian Hercules, and his son-in-law, the Cæsar Galerius, strongly urged him to make an end of the Christians.

We know that both united their efforts to obtain his consent, without which neither would have dreamed of attempting such a measure; it had just been rumored that Galerius had repaired to Nicomedia expressly to wrench from Dioeletian the edict of persecution, and it was also added that means the most infamous had been employed for the attainment of this end.

Such, then, were the sounds still vague, the menacing rumors which, towards the end of the year 297, were beginning to circulate through Rome, and increasing at this momentous period.*

In the house of Aula Plautia Laterana we again find collected together the pious women we have already seen there; but this reunion was more in conformity to their long continued mode of life than the result of terror at the threatened persecution. All, however, bore the weight of a secret sorrow, but it left unaltered the serenity of their features; and holy thoughts, or touching recollections, alone formed the substance of their conversations.

As on the evening we were first introduced to this peaceful union of Christian hearts, this union so admirable at the period we mention, they were occupied with work peculiar to their sex. But it was no longer for themselves they turned the spindle, spun the wool, or fashioned the fabric between their agile fingers; since Severian's arrival in

* We are in the year 293, when there was an attempt at persecution but which was soon abandoned. We shall not go much beyond this in our narrative. The great persecution which was to last ten years, three months and nineteen days (from the 23rd of February, 303, to the 13th of June, 313), was only a consequence of this first attempt, when Galerius had at length triumphed over Diocletian's hesitation.

Rome, so constant had been his appeals to their charity in favor of human beings without clothing, or consumed by sickness, that their exertions were inadequate to his daily demands.

At Rome, where those brilliant stuffs, brought from distant lands by occasional travelers, were immediately sold on the porticoes for their weight in gold, that they might decorate courtesans,—in this grand city, where industry existed not, where the most common article of necessity must be manufactured in every house, it was no unusual thing for ladies of the highest rank, aided only by their slaves, to provide themselves with everything requisite to their own maintenance and that of their husbands and children. The Empress Livia and the daughters of Augustus with their own hands spun the wool for their garments, but never had anyone seen a woman of this proud aristocracy preparing garments for the naked poor, or down of the softest fleeces to rest the suffering limbs of the infirm.

"A very pretty tunic which I have just finished!" exclaimed Lactorium, complacently showing her work to the other matrons. "I shall take pleasure in seeing the young girl who has reserved for me the honor of this labor. Is it not charming, indeed?"

Poor Lactorium! Even whilst asking a compliment, and asking it in the almost joyous tone of a contented heart, she could not repress a deep sigh.

Alas! she had been the betrothed of Aulus; but Aulus had become utterly unworthy of her. Since the last disgraceful news of the young patrician, communicated to her by her uncle Albinus, she strove, perhaps, with difficulty, to efface from her memory even the recollection of that affection. Aula Plautia Laterana looked sadly at the young girl, Aula wiped away a tear slowly descending from one of her moistened eyes, but the name of Aulus was not pronounced either by the desolate mother or the sister whose proud heart was wounded, notwithstanding its secret compassion.

"I cannot take the same pride in my work, this coarse garment which Severian has requested, as Lactorium can in hers," cheerily said Basilide, wishing to divert the minds of all from the painful thoughts awakened by the young girl's

involuntary sigh. "It is for an unhappy idiot who shivers continually, as if freezing with cold, and must be warmed. I wear out my fingers twisting this thick wool, and, truly, I do not know what will become of my hands!"

"Do you wish," asked Eva, who also formed a part of this reunion, and who was not the least active of all these pious women devoted to works of charity, "do you wish me to spare you this task to which you are not accustomed? Whilst in Thrace I often made garments similar to that which Severian desires for the poor idiot."

"Eva, and the persecution?" gaily responded Basilide. "Think you that will be sweet? Since you have supported it in Thrace, will you be willing to take my place when I am conducted before the judge? See these delicate hands that a little coarse wool suffices to chafe! I ask myself what they will be under the pressure of shackles and bruising of chains? Eva! Eva!" continued the young patrician, in a tone of mild badinage mingled with affectionate reproach, "you must be less compassionate and, above all, a little less jealous, do you hear?"

"I do not know why," said Eva, "I should be so anxious to work for this unhappy idiot who trembles incessantly, but I must acknowledge that, ever since Severian has charged you with this task, I have really envied you."

"You see," exclaimed Basilide, laughing, "how truly I guessed!"

And who, then, had secretly inclined Eva's heart towards the desire she had just expressed? Who had excited that holy jealousy of working for the relief of that old man who had been the corrupter of her youth, the kidnapper of her children, and whom, by her own acknowledgment, she had not entirely pardoned?

It was not Severian. He was careful to avoid one word that might make known how grand an occasion of practising charity Chaerestrate had afforded him in Ctesiphon's presence; moreover, he was absolutely ignorant of Eva's acquaintance with this man, and would not have understood the effect that his name would have produced if, by chance, pronounced amongst those who had heard Eva's story. It was God. Yes, it was God who, in pure souls, and, especially, on the eve of trials, wishes to destroy even the vestige of hostile feelings.

However, the word persecution, cast suddenly into the conversation by Basilide, had naturally awakened recollections too vivid in the minds of these assembled matrons and Christian virgins for them not to communicate their reflections upon so important an event, and the latest rumors as to its probability or uncertainty. Some affirmed that the persecution was near at hand; others that, according to the last report, it was all a false alarm.

The young Laetorium held strongly this last opinion; citing, as authority, her uncle Albinus, the broker.

"You know," said she, "how little favorable he is to the Christians, and yet he assures me they will not be persecuted. The Emperor Diocletian does not wish it; it seems he is afraid of us!"

"Yes, Diocletian hesitates, but Maximian Hercules and, especially Galerius, have sworn to vanquish his hesitations."

And Basilide, who thus replied to Laetorium, mentioned what had just passed at Nicomedia, information of which she had gained from very reliable sources.

"May the will of God be done!" exclaimed Aula Plautia Laterana, "armed with His holy grace, if the persecution is to commence, for how many of us it will be but the end of our woes! Will it not, Eva?"

"Oh! yes, my noble mistress," answered the old servant, respectfully kissing the matron's hand.

"It will be a glorious day for the Church and for us," said Aula, enthusiastically. "Reading and re-reading, for some time, the Acts of our predecessors in the race, I see that in smiles and festal robes they went to martyrdom."

"God will always sustain his elect; his hand will never fail us," answered Basilide.

"Alas! I am less resigned than you," murmured Laetorium, "every day uncle Albinus frightens me terribly by his accounts of the persecutions."

"Ah!" exclaimed Basilide, "didst thou not say but an instant ago that thy uncle did not believe the reports?"

"Doubtless, but adds he may be deceived, and then says to me: 'take care of thyself; do not depend upon me, I shall be forced to abandon thee.'"

Basilide was about to tell Laetorium how much she ad-

mired the touching affection of the broker Albinus for his niece when, suddenly, Severian appeared in their midst. His countenance was radiant and his eye illumined with all the fires of a holy enthusiasm.

"Rejoice!" cried he, addressing the assembled matrons and virgins before any of them had been able to ask him a single question, "Rejoice, the hour of combat has sounded! Behold the day of triumph!"

"The persecution!" exclaimed the timid Lactorium, trembling in every limb.

"The persecution! yes, the persecution!" repeated Severian. "Glory to God! Glory to His martyrs!"

"And how have you learned this news?" inquired the other matrons.

"One of our brethren from Bythinia has just arrived, preceding by a few days or, perhaps, a few hours only, the new Roman prefect charged with the execution of the Emperor's edict."

"Diocletian has consented to issue the edict?"

"Here is how Galerius obtained it. Diocletian, troubled, filled with terror, incessantly interrogated the future. Every day, in his presence, were slaughtered whole herds of vile animals, that, from their entrails, he might discover the secrets of the future. On a certain day he wished his court to assist at these impieties. Some Christians were mingled with the multitude and, making the sign of the cross, the demons ceased to answer. Diocletian became furious, the trembling soothsayers declared to him that it was the ordinary enemies of the national religion who had put to flight these spirits of darkness and lies; his rage waxed stronger. He commanded our brethren present to sacrifice to the gods or be beaten to death by rods; he sought those who were about the palace, and, on all sides, sent out orders that all Christians, even the soldiers, should offer incense to the infernal divinities.* The new prefect of Rome, who is said to be animated with a particular hatred against us, has been selected by the Cæsar Galerius."

"Is his name known?" asked Aula Plautia Laterana.

"Yes," said Severian, "it is Cnæus Furius Nomentanus."

*Lactantius, de Morte persec., cap. 10.

At this name, so great was the movement of surprise among all present that, for some minutes, the young man regarded them with unfeigned astonishment.

"What means this emotion?" he, at last, inquired of Plautia, seeing that her looks were particularly directed to himself and Eva.

"Truly," said this noble lady, "I can say nothing yet; but it appears to me that the finger of God is here, and that the revelation of His justice will not be long delayed."

CHAPTER XIX.

AT SIRMIUM.

WHEN Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus left Rome accompanied by Carpinatius, as we have already described, it was (we recollect) for the purpose of repairing to the Caesar Galerius.

But Galerius had established the seat of his particular government at Sirmium, the capital of Pannonia, and perhaps it may not be uninteresting to follow thither our patrician slave.

But first of all, why had Carpinatius conducted Furius to such a distant country? Carpinatius, this man of ghastly visage, thin, compressed lips never distended by a smile, had like Ctesiphon, though from different motives, vowed a mortal hatred to his former associate. The prodigious opulence of Furius was the only cause which had enkindled all the fires of cupidity in this man's avaricious soul. To render himself master of that fortune, to despoil the parvenu of his treasures, to humble and reduce him to his primitive condition, such were the secret designs of Carpinatius, such the thoughts brooding ardently in the depths of his heart, consumed by jealousy.

He had attempted this at Rome, when he and Furius settled accounts, but his first essay proving unsuccessful, there resulted for him the necessity of a wandering life, employed in seeking a new associate, whom he had found in the Caesar Galerius.

This former herdsman of Dacia, upon whose shoulders Diocletian had, six years ago, cast the imperial mantle, was indebted for such an elevation of fortune to his intrepidity against the Barbarians, who more than once had inflicted bloody defeats on the Roman legions.

Galerius restored the honor of Diocletian's arms, encouraged the timid Emperor and unskillful general against the fear of new disasters, charged himself with protecting the frontiers, and, by his incontestable valor, everywhere turned back the tide of invasion of those innumerable multitudes, who had gradually grown warlike in the long continued struggle against Rome.

Galerius become a Caesar, all trembled around him, even Diocletian. He was tall in stature, of terribly brutal manners, and we shall not dare say of frightful aspect, for although represented by Lactantius as a species of monster, with swollen, bloated flesh, and of hideous corpulence,* Aurelius Victor, † as well as Eutropha, ‡ affirm that his personal appearance was pleasing, and they also endow him with certain moral qualities, which are singularly contradicted by the deeds laid to his charge.

He was at all events, however, a formidable spendthrift, an audacious prodigy in the most shameful exactions, and, at present, this is sufficient to indicate the relative situation of Carpinatius, and why he had persuaded Furius, after the outrage endured at the Circus, to proceed to Pannonia, and cast himself into the arms of Galerius.

Carpinatius, in quest of new gains and gigantic profits, had, on separating from his old associate, hastened to the court of Galerius, because there only could he place at the service of unequalled avidity and fearful depredations all the resources of a mind fertile in expedients, accomplished in every wily scheme of lucrative operations.

To have the power of doing evil, and in consequence of that power to thirst for gold, is not indeed sufficient, tho gold must be discovered, for once become the property of an individual, it is more effectually concealed in his hands than in the bosom of unexplored mines.

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* Erat corpus moribus congruens, status celsus, caro ingens in horrendam magnitudinem diffusa et inflata (de Morte persec. cap. 9).
† Epitome, de Caesaribus.
‡ Libr. X, cap. I.

Notwithstanding his fury, notwithstanding tortures and death, Galerius had exhausted all those means of extortion which Lactantius* has described in vivid colors. It was then there offered himself to the despairing Caesar this Carpinatius, whose forehead was impassible, his visage impenetrable, his mouth without the vestige of a smile, and eyes which gleamed amidst this sinister, icy countenance like two burning coals.

Galerius understood the man, and immediately made him chief of all those who, throughout the provinces under Galerius' authority, were sent to plunder houses, devastate countries, torture children, women, and slaves, so as to draw from them the secret of the place where their fathers', husbands', or masters' fortunes were buried, or to sell them when there were no treasures to be revealed.† It was on one of these expeditions, pushed even to Thrace, that Carpinatius became fully acquainted with the history of Furius, which had hitherto been mere conjecture. This information was reserved as a safeguard against the Caesar's growing anger, should he one day commence to get dissatisfied; for his coffers must always be full, and when they were not, woe to those who found themselves within his reach!

But it happened, that Carpinatius, who had made even beggars‡ jump into the water, to inspire them with the good idea of redeeming their miserable lives by casting on shore the last obulus concealed under their squalid rags, it happened, we say, that Carpinatius presented himself to the Caesar Galerius quite embarrassed because, although able to obtain funds, he had absolutely nothing to pour into this formidable master's empty treasury. On this very day, and probably for the reason we have just mentioned, Galerius was in a most malicious humor.

Under every circumstance, this malicious humor was something very grave, but particularly to be dreaded when his mother was present.

And she was there,—an old country-woman, born in the Trans-Danubian mountains, she had given birth to Galerius

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* De Morte persecutorum, cap. 23.
† Lactantius, de Morte persecutorum, cap. 23.
‡ Lactantius, ibid.

in the mountain gorges of Dacia, whither the Carpi * had forced her to seek an asylum; she was stern to herself, merciless to others; covetous, superstitious, her soul as wrinkled as her visage; her eye quick and piercing, the words of her coarse language strongly accented, rough and sharp.

She was named Romula.

Carpinatius, wishing to excuse himself, began to explain why he returned empty-handed.

"Dost thou not see, then," said the mother to her son, immediately interrupting these explanations, "that this robber is like all the others! He has robbed thee! If I were thou, I would make him sup with Tiberius and Caligula!"

It seems that this supper was not according to anyone's taste, for in spite of Carpinatius' habitual self-control, he could not repress a shiver which even extended to his lip, suddenly relaxing its compression.

Romula began to laugh, and Galerius accompanied her.

Carpinatius, making a supreme effort, recovered himself.

"I will propose," said he, boldly, "another guest, who can defray the expenses of the feast better than I."

"His name?"

"His name is of little consequence, but his condition is interesting. He is an original serf of one of the Thracian colonies, and two associates that I know have, only a short time ago, returned him, one a million pieces of gold, the other triple that amount—not counting what may be under the bolts of his coffers."

"Where is this man?" interrupted Galerius, whose countenance gleamed at the enumeration of these fabulous riches.

"At Rome," replied Carpinatius.

"A tempting morsel for the appetite of Maximian Hercules!" † exclaimed Romula.

"And which would suit mine better," said Galerius, giving his mother a knowing glance. "Couldst thou, by chance, bring him hither?" inquired he of Carpinatius.

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*A barbarous nation dreaded by all those who then infested the frontiers of the Empire. We believe they formed part of the Scythians, Goths, and Getae, who, at this epoch, made most frequent invasions.

†Maximian Hercules had Italy and Rome under his government, but he resided at Milan.

"I have not yet had an opportunity, Prince, but can find one, if you permit me to go to Rome."

"Well, go, and return with him, or woe to thee! Thou knowest I have a long arm, from which no one that I wish to reach could escape, even were he at the extremities of the world!"

Carpinatius, bowing profoundly before the Caesar Galerius, and declaring his devotion, his great desire of returning very soon with the rich prey he had promised, set out on his journey.

But he scarcely knew by what means to persuade Furius into Pannonia. At all events, he must begin by conciliating Furius, who had been offended since the settlement of their accounts. This was soon accomplished, because Carpinatius knew how to make himself anxious, obsequious, fawning towards Furius, whose almost constant companion he became, after triumphing over the first coolness. The parvenu, despite his prodigious opulence, suffered from isolation, and the servility of his ancient colleague tempered, in the solitude of his dwelling, the pangs inflicted by public disdain.

This was the state of affairs when at the Circus Maximus occurred the chariot race, in which Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus had flattered himself with the hope of inscribing his name among the victors.

Carpinatius accompanied him. He was a witness to the blow which the master's hand dealt across the face of the slave who had not only robbed him, but had boasted of espousing Aula. For some time, Carpinatius had been in a state of vage inquietude; the thought frequently came to mind that Galerius must begin to murmur at his long sojourn in Rome. But as the promise must be kept, an occasion was necessary, and this occasion he must await.

Carpinatius trembled with joy on receiving into his arms the humiliated Furius, for Fortune herself had this day come to his assistance.

After this public insult, Furius could no longer remain at Rome; he would burn with the desire of revenge, he would think of nothing, except the certainty of procuring a brilliant retaliation. Indeed, the infuriated parvenu smiled at this consoling perspective, and Carpinatius was proceeding

towards the dwelling to superintend their preparations for departure, when suddenly Ctesiphon presented himself.

Amidst all his efforts to realize the promise made Galerius, two keen subjects of regret had more than once gnawed at the heart of Carpinatius. The first was the idea of himself conducting this Furius whom he so strongly hated, and whose opulence he so coveted, into the presence of him who had already many millions of gold pieces. The second was to find himself again near him who by a simple caprice could make one sup with Tiberius and Caligula.

But what was to be done?

Ctesiphon was the response to this question, and also the solace of the double regret. With Ctesiphon, he could divide the treasures of this native serf, whom he would re-sell for the Thracian domain; with Ctesiphon, he could laugh at the Caesar's power and menaces. This power would frighten Ctesiphon and induce him to heed Carpinatius. As to menaces, if Ctesiphon consented to a division, Carpinatius would have sufficient gold to escape the Caesar's pursuit.

Such was the plan which the simple meeting with Ctesiphon had inspired in him who was then about six hundred miles from Sirmium, and asked nothing more than to be still farther distant.

But the "mensarius," we remember, remained untractable, and, apparently at least, little prepossessed in favor of the formidable adversary whose enormous credit and power, boasted of by Carpinatius, had appeared as an insurmountable obstacle to his own designs.

Carpinatius, then very much disappointed, must resign himself to retrace the long way which, across Germany, would conduct him and Furius to the capital of savage Pannonia, and also within reach of Galerius and his sweet mother, the avaricious old Romula.

How beautiful a thing is imagination! And how astonishingly tender the heart of a traveling companion!

During this long journey, Carpinatius dreamed of the horrors Romula would counsel her son to bestow upon him who had cast into their hands such unknown treasures.

And when he regarded Furius, which often happened, he enjoyed in anticipation all the pleasure that individual would have, in being the guest of Tiberius and Caligula.

CHAPTER XX.

GALERIUS, TIBERIUS AND CALIGULA.

WHEN Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus arrived at Sirmium and saw, for the first time, the Caesar Galerius, he found that personage in one of the great courts of his vast dwelling. He was in the midst of his soldiers, and occupied in playing with them a game of quoits.

He was in a charming humor.

For at this exercise, in which he excelled, he had beaten the strongest and most skillful of all his opponents; and he now laughed heartily at seeing the vanquished, piteously, and without daring to complain, support the punishment of their defeat.

This punishment consisted in suspending to the nose of him who had lost a certain number of points a fork of hard wood, cleft in the middle, and pressing so violently, that in a few minutes the sides of the nose became violet, whilst from the compressed nostrils and panting mouth escaped that sharp, shrill breath which always betokens difficulty of respiration.*

Whilst the game continued with their comrades, about a dozen defeated legionaries promenaded the length and breadth of the court, with forks suspended to the extremities (more or less elongated or flattened) of their noses, not every one of which resembled that of an Antinous. Every time Galerius began to laugh they were prompt to banter one another upon their ridiculous state, though there was not one among them but instinctively understood that the master's laugh could turn to a threat, and the threat to something like a volley of blows, or even a quickly driven thrust from the heavy sword which was seldom absent from the formidable player's belt.

The arrival of Carpinatius, then, added greatly to the relief of all, both those submitting to the fork, and those awaiting it, for Galerius ceased playing the moment this arrival was announced. He was, we have already said, in a playful humor; as a proof of which his first gesture was

* Amm. Marcell., Lib. XIV, cap. 6.

to show Carpinatius all these victims of his skill at the noble game of quoits, and his first word a rough jest at their expense, and seasoned with a formidable burst of laughter. Then, without appearing to take any other notice of Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus, who bent before him in repeated salutations, he said:

"Shall we go to see my mother Romula?"

And he immediately walked ahead of them, as if the reply had been a decided affirmative.

Furius began to feel afraid of the Caesar Galerius.

The great stature and brutal voice counted for something; but (what an odd impression!) the newcomer's unfavorable, discouraging opinion was based particularly upon the fact, that Galerius had not commanded the forks to be withdrawn from his legionaries' noses.

Romula, at the moment her son entered, followed by two persons, was occupied according to her daily and hourly custom of sacrificing to the deities of her native mountains. She was, indeed, a very superstitious woman, and, as we have heretofore mentioned, also of a very greedy, cunning disposition, which equally requires our notice. These sacrifices served three ends. First, the blood of the victims satisfied her piety towards the divinities of her country. Her numerous domestics were fed with the flesh; and this afforded an infalliblo means of distinguishing a Christian from a pagan; for the former refused these sacrilegious meats, which the worshipers of false gods eat without scruple. * Thus we see that in Romula's sacrifices, everything was turned to advantage, especially the latter circumstance, at this particular period, when her son had just obtained of Diocletian the edict of persecution.

"Mother," said Galerius, on entering, "I bring you a very handsome young man, whom you will bo pleased to see."

And, indeed, neither youth, beautiful features, nor distinguished appearance were lacking in Furius.

In an equal degree with Severian, he had retained that delicacy of form inherited from their mother, and which

* For all these details, see Lactantius, de Morte persecutorum, cap. XI.

now, at the age of thirty-three, had expanded into the rich maturity of a healthy, vigorous nature.

"Is he as rich as Carpinatius said?" inquired Romula, who always went directly to the point, and, moreover, held in light esteem any bodily graces, so entirely opposed to those of her son.

"It is what I shall not be long in finding out," answered Galerius, with that coarse, brutal laugh, which he never restrained, not even in the presence of Diocletian, who could not overcome his fear of it. "But for to-day," added he, "do not speak of it; we must practice hospitality, and I expect you to prepare me a supper."

"The grand supper?" interrupted Romula, laughing exactly like her son, the peals of her quivering voice almost giving one a chill.

"No, the little supper. We have time for the great supper, but I see no harm should it not take place before to-morrow."

During this dialogue between mother and son, Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus was of a mortal pallor; he saw himself caught in a snare, and every time the Caesar's eye rested upon him, he in turn cast on Carpinatius a look of inexpressible hatred.

But Carpinatius was impassible.

Meanwhile, Galerius, who never lost much time in whatever he had to say or do, having made a sign that the presentation to his mother was at an end, immediately left the apartment, followed by his two guests.

During the day, Furius recovered courage.

The Caesar Galerius was truly a charming man; he inquired all the details; the insult of the Circus Maximus must be revenged; he himself would furnish the opportunity and means; he had, all signed by the Emperor Maximian, a commission for the prefectship of Rome, and would willingly remit it to him, who, even without the incentive of a personal insult, would engage to allow no truce to the Christians, whom he must finish, and whom Diocletian at last consented to have annihilated, as they deserved.

Decidedly, Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus had been wrong in suspecting the devotion of his colleague, Carpinatius, and regarding him as he had lately with such wicked eyes.

Carpinatius had not exaggerated his credit with Galerius. It was certainly to his influence that Furius was indebted for the splendid offer made soon after his arrival, and opening before him such dazzling prospects.

The "little" supper took place, and with so much animation that the head of Furius was completely turned.

Real mountain game of every sort was included in the bill of fare, and Galerius drank so deeply, that three men who had undertaken to imitate him rolled off the festal couch. These copious libations did not diminish his brutality; on the contrary, they recalled more forcibly the former herdsman; and in looking at Furius, peals of laughter, which would have made many others shudder, burst from his lips; yet, this excepted, the future prefect of Rome was charmed, and would gladly have thrown his two arms around the neck of Carpinatius, had the latter been disposed to correspond, ever so little, to such transports of tenderness.

But Carpinatius was ill at ease, and an attentive observer would have noticed that he trembled. When the supper was ended, Galerius, with all his force, dashed upon the ground the brimming cup of wine which had just been handed him, and, heaving a great sigh of satisfaction, exclaimed:

"The imperial patents!"

Immediately two officers of the palace respectfully deposited before him a rich casket, incrested with precious stones, from which he drew forth a large diploma of the finest pergamina, to the extremities of which were suspended golden balls.

"There," said he, addressing himself to Furius, who never for an instant lost sight of these movements, "there is the Emperor Maximian's commission for the new prefect of Rome. Only the name is to be inscribed—"

Furius, who had almost risen from his festal couch, inclined as he had never done before the king of the gods himself.

"'Nomen contra nomen,'" * said the Cæsar Galerius, agreeably, using a term very familiar to the bankers of the Forum, and immediately understood by the parvenu.

* Literally, name against name, that is, credit against credit; or in other terms: I give you this, you give me that.

"Ah!" sighed he, involuntarily.

Galerius burst out into a fit of laughter, which he indulged for some time.

"Is it not just?" said he, when this great hilarity was somewhat appeased.

And as Furius did not answer, Galerius handed him another sheet of the whitest pergamina, saying:

"Give me your 'nomen' for a quarter of a million pieces of gold,* and I confer upon you the Emperor Maximian's commission."

Furius was of a livid pallor, nevertheless, he must respond.

"I am deeply grieved, Prince," murmured he in a stifled voice, "but I am not rich enough to pay for this most high favor at such a price as you name."

"By Jupiter! you are wrong! But no more talk about it."

And the Caesar Galerius, closing the casket, commanded his attendants to bring him another cup of wine, which he emptied at one draught.

"To-morrow," said he, I wish you to sup with two predecessors of the Emperor Maximian."

Scarcely had these words been pronounced, when armed soldiers surrounded the unhappy Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus, who felt himself falling into a swoon.

Galerius then left the festal couch and made a sign for Carpinatius to follow.

At the moment of leaving, he turned toward the prisoner and laughing, said:

"You must defy Tiberius; I warn you, he always was a hypocrite, and is now worse than ever. As to Caligula, he is not changed; he is always the same fool, easily putting himself into a rage."

Then he and Carpinatius left the apartment.

For some minutes there was heard, amidst the silence reigning everywhere, his loud bursts of laughter, and the gradually lessening sound of his rough jokes.

But laughter and sarcasms having died away, the vast house had no more echoes than a sepulchre.

*One hundred million of francs. The nomen was what we call an acknowledgment or promise to pay.

Though well treated by his guards, Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus passed a night of mortal anguish.

He could no longer doubt that the secret of his opulence had been betrayed; Carpinatius had sold him to the Caesar Galerius; a bloody mystery enveloped him; how must he escape from ruin or death?

On the morrow, at the Caesar's usual hour of supping, the prisoner was conducted into the "trielinium" already occupied by the formidable amphytrion and Carpinatius.

Nothing had been changed. As on the previous day, three couches with purple cushions were placed around the table loaded with the same monstrous preparations; and the rich casket containing the imperial patents still sparkled under the light of burning lamps.

But at the end of this "trielinium" was another with table and couches like the first. Here Tiberius and Caligula walked up and down, awaiting their guest.

They were two bears of extraordinary ferocity and size, selected from all those in the Caesar's possession, and with great care re-united in his palace at Sirmium, to enliven his suppers, as Lactantius says, * and delight his heart, by seeing them feed upon the flesh and blood of the unhappy wretches, who were no sooner cast into this frightful den than they were torn to pieces by these hungry animals.

A strong grate separated them from the "trielinium," where Galerius, eating and drinking in safety, could laugh pleasantly ("ridebat suavissime") at the agony, and the piercing cries of the victims, which every day contributed to the diversion of his repasts. †

But a glimpse of Tiberius and Caligula, standing against the grate, through which they ran their formidable paws, as if ready to seize him, was necessary to make Furius fall down before Galerius, and cry out that he was at the Caesar's mercy.

"By Jupiter!" said the latter, still smiling, "that is what I call understanding it readily!"

And he handed Furius the sheet of white parchment, upon which the parvenu with great difficulty wrote and signed in

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* Lactantius, de Morte persecutorum, cap. 21.
† Nec unquam sine humano cruore caenabat (Ibid).

a legible manner his note for a quarter of a million pieces of gold; his whole frame quivering with emotion, his hand jerking involuntarily.

"Carpinatius," resumed Galerius, "to-morrow thou wilt depart for Rome, and Furius will give thee all instructions concerning the gold, that it may be promptly remitted into my hands; otherwise I should be constrained to retard indefinitely the departure of the Emperor Maximian's prefect."

This simple circumstance shows us what Galerius foresaw. He in turn was not going to be the dupe of Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus.

Perhaps his ideas were similar to those of the old Romans mentioned by Seneca, who never felt sure of a thing until it was in their hands, and regarded the best title as no more than a vain spectre of possession, or a deceitful shadow of fortune. * To the principal characteristics of Galerius, innate brutality and frightful cynicism, he joined a quickness and cunning perceived by the Emperors Diocletian and Maximian too late, and when nothing remained for them but to abdicate in his favor.

Meanwhile, Tiberius and Caligula waited, until Galerius, taking pity on them, commanded them to be gratified with two prisoners held in reserve. Furius could then see what his fate had been, had he refused to sign the leaf of white parchment.

This supper, moreover, was a little merrier than the preceding.

Only Furius neither eat nor drank, but Galerius paid no attention to his guest's small appetite.

"Do you know," said he, at a certain moment, "why I have not made you better acquainted with the Emperor Maximian's predecessors?"

Very naturally Furius had no response to this question

"Because," added Galerius, "men skillful enough to amass a quarter of a million gold pieces can gain more, and consequently, it is good management to keep such men for another occasion."

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*Nisi rem sua manu tenent. Diplomata, et syngraphae, et cautiones habendi simulacra, umbras quasdam avaritiae laborantis (Seneque, de Benef., Lib. VIII, cap. 10).

And after drinking as on the preceding evening a large cup of generous wine, he rose from his couch, and motioning Carpinatius to follow, both went out.

Some months later, the Caesar Galerius remitted to Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus the Emperor Maximian's commission. This signified that the vain shadows had given place to a splendid reality. History does not mention what part of the quarter of a million Romula counseled her son to offer Carpinatius; and if this man had merited the honor of having Tacitus for historian, he would no doubt have added, that there was no more account of Carpinatius, either of praise or blame.

Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus hastened to depart for Rome. Rage was in his heart, and he promised himself to crush all the Christians.

This was also what the Caesar Galerius had wished

CHAPTER XXI.

VAE SOLI.

LET us stop a little, for great as is the distance from Sirmium to Rome, and such the rapidity with which Cnaeus Furius devours space, we have time to rejoin him!

"Vae soli!" Woe to him who is alone! From Augustus to Diocletian, it is the cry that can be repeated of all those whom Rome during these three centuries had clothed with the imperial purple, and the sentence of the holy book applies to them from the beginning.

Though possessing neither just right nor true strength, they had taken all and absorbed all. The consulship, the dictatorship, the tribunitial authority, the magistracies, all the powers of the republic were concentrated in them, or had become but vain titles for those with whom they truly wished to share.

They were "princes," this name distinguishing them as the first citizens of the nation commanding other nations, yet far from forming a part of the nation, they had always been alone, always felt themselves alone, always considered themselves alone.

They were "Emperors," because this title had ever signified strength ("imperium"); but their hands only held the sword, and the Pretorians convinced them that strength was not theirs.

One succeeded another; as to Rome, she scarcely inquired why this one went and that one came, for, in reality, they held nothing and represented nothing but vengeance.

The vengeance of the commonalty against the aristocracy.

But they (the Emperors) being only instruments were frequently rejected, for an instrument does not always work as it should, and the hand that moves it is often capricious.

Augustus was so well aware of his solitary situation that he always compared himself to an actor upon whom the curtain might suddenly drop; and, in dying, he said to his friends:

"Have I not played this comedy well?"

So isolated did he feel upon this grand theatre! so astonished at himself for having been able to play his part to the end!

For Tiberius, it was still worse: he was afraid of Rome, and Rome of him. The rocks of Caprea served better to conceal his terrors than his hypocrisies and monstrous crimes.

Caligula became crazy from his isolation, and Claudius imbecile.

The same cause made a madman of Nero who had begun well.* Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, says Chateaubriand, barely escaped, but this very fact proved what those can endure who, amidst a general lassitude, are elevated to power by the audacity of a few, and supported only by the secret vows of a small number of partisans.†

Vespasian was the first example of a general who, proclaimed Emperor by his legions distant from Rome, was henceforth to be forced upon her if she refused to receive him.‡ With two sons at his side he believed himself able to found a dynasty; but, like all the other Caesars, his isolation soon became a torment, and, during his whole reign, nothing appeased his uneasy forebodings.

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*Suetonius in Neronius, cap. 29.
†Tacitus, Histor. Lib. 1, cap. 28.
‡Tacitus, Histor. Lib. 1, cap. 50.

Titus, who had only a favorable beginning, did not afford such hopes as Nero at the commencement of his reign. Dion Cassius is immediately associated in our minds with the thought that Titus had not time to become a detestable tyrant.

Domitian resumed all the instincts of the fallow deer which had so agitated Nero in the baseless fright of the Golden House. Both, like monsters of the desert's caverns, precipitated themselves upon men; one to satisfy his rage by devouring them with his own teeth,* the other to revel in the blood sucked by his greedy lips.†

Such were the twelve first Caesars.

Surely, neither the abuse of power, nor barbarous manners, nor the servility of the masses, suffice to account for such strange and permanent emotions, which took possession of these princes the instant they were elevated to the imperial purple and never quitted them until death.

It is a unique spectacle in history which has never been reproduced with the same continuity.

The age of Augustus had diffused throughout Rome the balmy breath of a most delicate civilization, to which we see that his successors did not remain strangers.

Tiberius was literary; Claudius a historian; Caligula wrote upon eloquence; Nero aspired to the double glory of the poet and musician; Domitian loved belles-lettres, and Rome was indebted to him for the possession of considerable libraries collected with intelligent care.

It was not, then, want of light which induced such brutish lives.

On the other side, absolute princes are not at all unusual in the annals of history; we could count many who were implacable, but in no other nation has anyone ever seen such a succession of cruel, senseless monsters.

We must then inquire farther, and shall, without difficulty, discover the cause to be just what we have already indicated.

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*Novissime quasi genus lusus excogitavit, quo ferre pelle contectus, emitteretur e cavea, virorumque ac feminarum ad stipitem deligatorum, membra invaderet. (Suetonius in Neronius, cap. 48.)

†Nuper illa immanissima bellua (Domitianus), plurimo terrore domum munierat; cum velut quodam specu inclusa nunc propinquorum sanguinem lamberet, nunc se ad clarissimorum civium strages cædesque proferret. (Pliny the Younger, Panegyr. cap. 48.)

The Caesars' isolation arose from the fact that their office was really a redundancy, and almost an inutility. in the State.

"They were accepted," says Tacitus, "to put an end to the conflicts of opposing powers and as a refuge against the magistrates' exactions; in place of the continual and perilous struggle of the ancient republic the Romans foresaw some hope of peace and assured repose* under the shade of Imperial authority; but this hope proved a deceitful mirage, which they themselves soon perceived was no compensation for their losses."

Without the Emperors the Republic, whose memory was incessantly invoked to pretend that it still existed, would have lost nothing of its ancient vitality; with them it was but one more cause of terror added to those already possessed.

Do we now understand what the prince can become who, conscious of being but a fifth wheel in the institution, at the same time, feels himself repulsed by all as an object of fear?

At first, he will strive after good, as is exemplified in the conduct of the worst Emperors; he will endeavor to appease the most suspicious prejudices, but, finding his kindly anxiety only an additional cause of abandonment and absolute solitude,† then will he grow reckless and frantic, becoming a prey to those attacks of furious delirium which, at the end of two or three years at most, shall begin to arouse the masters of the world. "Væ soli!"

We must recollect, however, that after Domitian's time the situation was no longer the same, but entirely transformed.

Why, and how?

Because, notwithstanding Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, and some few others that could be cited, the Emperors lived more isolated than ever at Rome, and because, from this moment, the Eternal City began to repulse them from its walls.

A conspiracy, the sure tendency and avowed end of which we explained in our former work,‡ had attempted eleva-

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*Tacitus, Annales, Lib. 1, cap. 1.

†Salutationes tuas fuga et vastetas sequitur. (Pliny the Younger, Panegyric, cap. 48.)

‡See Aurelia, or "The Jews of Capena Gate," third part.

ting to the Empire the two Christian sons of the martyr Flavius Clemens.

This conspiracy failed. First, because the times were not yet ripe for the accession of Christianity to power, and also because, not a Caesar, but a father did Rome expect from the new religion.

However, we perceive what will take place.

Up to Domitian's time the persecutions against Christianity were based upon its hostility to the faith and ancient gods of Rome; after that, there was found ample reason for persecution in the increasing anguish of the Emperors concerning their power and even stability at Rome.

Trajan was the first to perceive that Christianity, in giving men the promise of a better future and showing them liberty afar off, contained a serious menace against the Empire, and, consequently, he was the first who persecuted Christianity on account of its doctrines.*

Marcus Aurelius declared himself its enemy in the name of philosophy, a reason which was absolutely the same as Trajan's. Philosophy formed the new embankment raised against these waters always rising, and which already covered a great part of the Empire.

And, afterwards, when it was certain that tortures could not make Christians forsake their faith, and philosophy herself proved powerless, then everything was plunged in confusion, and the Emperors defended themselves as best they could.

There were attempts at moderation, followed by fresh outbursts of fury.

And these blows against Christianity were struck, not by the arms of the most detestable Emperors, but by those of the least worthless.

What did it concern Commodius, Caracalla, Heliogabalus, and others of their class, that the Christians were a menace to the Empire? Would it not last as long as the orgies after which they were assassinated?

But Severus, Decius, Aurelian, esteemed their power and reflected more; besides, it was not simply their power but Rome, herself, which they feared would abandon them.

*See the celebrated letter of Pliny the Younger to the Emperor Trajan.

For a long time had Rome endured, with apparent indifferenee, the strangest humiliations from her princes.

Thus, she had been bought;* she had suffered strangers, barbarians,† the sons of slaves,‡ chiefs of brigands,§ to become Emperors, but with the same indifferenee had she seen them slaughtered among themselves or fall by the hands of their own partisans, and, more than this, she no longer gave herself to them.

To whom did she give herself?

Who could tell exactly?

But from the time of Heliogabalus, whom the Pretorians massacred, and, after attempting to bury in a sewer, they at last threw into the Tiber with a stone around the neck of the corpse, the Emperors no longer live in Rome or die there.‖

There are two, Philippus and Emilian, assassinated in Italy, the first at Verona, the second at Spoleto; where have the others disappeared?

Everywhere. In Germany, at Carthage in Mauritania, in the extreme East, in Moesia, in Thrace beyond the Tigris, but at Rome, never!

Though dying afar off, they could at least live in Rome.

But for more than a century and a half have they resided elsewhere, scarcely daring to show themselves at Rome.

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*In the year 173 by Didius Julianus.

†Maximian was a Goth by birth.

‡Pertinax was the son of a slave.

§ Maximian and Philippus, surnamed the Arab, were only chiefs of a band of malefactors.

‖ For the reader's instruction, here is a picture of the death of every Roman Emperor from Heliogabalus to Constantine:

Heliogabalus, massacred A. D., 217; Alexander Severus, killed in Germany, 217 Maximian, a Goth by birth, and chief of a body of brigands, massacred at Aquileia, 236; Gordian, strangled at Carthage, 236; Gordian II, his son, slain in Mauritania, 237; Pupius Balbinas, massacred by the Pretorians, 238; Gordian III, assassinated in the East, 238; Philippus, assassinated at Verona, 249; Messius Decius, slain in a conflict with the Getae, 251; Emilian, slain at Spoleto, 253; Valerian died a slave of Sapor, the Persian King, 253; Claudius II died of the pest at Sirmium, 270; Aurelian, assassinated in Thrace, 275; Tacitus died at Tarsus, in Cilicia, 276; Florian, slain at Tarsus, 276; Probus, slain near Sirmium, 282; Calus, struck by lightning beyond the Tigris, 283; Numerian, slain near Perinthusin, Thrace, 284; Carus, killed in Moesia, 285; Diocletian died at Salona, 313; Maximian Hercules, strangled himself at Marseilles, 310; Galerius died at Sardica, 311; Constantius Chlorus died at Eboracum (York), 306; Maxentius died at the Milvius bridge, 312; Maximian Daia died at Adrianople, 313; Licinius, strangled at Thessalonica, 328; Constantine died at Constantinople, 337.

Why? Because convinced that in the Eternal City their state of isolation increases; and there is no solitude so frightful as that in the midst of a people.

But here we are at the reign of Diocletian, a freedman made Emperor at Chalcedonia by the army. After the death of Caius he hastens to Rome to be recognized there, but does he remain? No, he soon returns to Nicomedia, which had become the Imperial City, and, until his abdication, seldom appears in Italy except at intervals of great length.

Maximian becomes his colleague, and two Cæsars, Constantius Chlorus and Galerius, are soon called to share the two Emperors' burden of power. Maximian receives Italy under his government. Will he establish himself at Rome?

No, he selects Milan.

Could he be afraid of Rome? Who knows?

Let us go a step farther, even beyond the limits assigned to this work.

Constantine has triumphed over Maxentius at the Milvius bridge, and, after this victory, for the first time in his life, he enters Rome;* will he remain?

He restrains in Gaul the invasions of the Franks upon the Rhine, he takes measures for the defeat of Licinius, his last rival in the Empire, and, having accomplished this (324), we behold him devoted to one thought alone, that of flying from Rome and founding a Capital elsewhere.

At one time, he selects ancient Ilium, but, after reflection, changes his plans; and Byzantium, enlarged and surrounded by a new wall, becomes Constantinople, A. D., 329.

Wherefore is Constantine, like all the other Emperors, eager to quit Rome and seek a place of residence?

Ah! a residence in Rome is no longer possible for the masters of the world.

Because Constantine, like all his predecessors, saw there awaiting him solitude and abandonment.

Solitude in power; abandonment even in his new religion.

And why? At Rome there was another man, and this man was not alone.

He was called, as we have already said, the Roman priest (antistes Romanus).

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*Constantine was educated near Diocletian, at Nicomedia, from whom he escaped to rejoin his father in Gaul, a very short time before his (father's) death.

Individually, he did not live longer than the Emperors, and, from the time of Peter, usually fell a victim to their fury; but he died in Rome and the Emperors did not.

He was not alone. Nearly all the ancient patriciate surrounded him, the miserable and wretched looked up to him, the entire world turned towards him its looks and hopes.

He was the Pontiff. In the new Faith of which he was the guardian were comprised all the aspirations of the past, all the desires springing towards the future.

Was he a King? Yes, and more than an Emperor.

He was King of Rome because possessed of its pontificate; also, because both mighty and weak were connected with him.

Moreover, he had immortality. Rome knew the promise, and even they were its firmest believers who wore themselves out in the most desperate efforts to prevent its fulfilment.

Diocletian was not mistaken. He (but for Galerius, who profited by his weak, old age) would have been wiso enough to remain at a distance from the "antistes Romanus," nor would he ever have persecuted the Christians.*

When Galerius had succeeded in obtaining from him the edict, and the persecutions really began,† he abdicated.‡

Constantine was no longer mistaken as to the significance of the events we have mentioned.

"The same girdle could not enclose both the Emperor and the Pontiff; Constantine ceded Rome to the Pope," says Count de Maistre. §

Only too much honor is here given Constantine; he understood the necessity of retiring, but yielded nothing.

He endeavored to transport to Constantinople the patriciate, the Faith, and even the pontificate. In reality, this

* Lactantius, de Mort. perecutorum, cap. 11.

† The edict was signed by Diocletian towards the end of the year 302, but the destruction of the church at Nicomedia, which was the beginning of the persecution, did not take place till February 23d, 303.

‡ May 1st, 305, about twenty-six months after the commencement of the persecution.

§ For brevity's sake, we shall cite only this phrase of the Count de Maistre, but it would be well for the reader to trace back, in the beautiful work of Mgr. Dupanloup, Bishop of Orleans, On the Pontifical Sovereignty, the entire passage, which, with similar words of M. Villemain, and the illustrious prelate's own reflections, confirm all we have said on this subject. (See pages 91 and 73.)

Christian Emperor, himself, continued to be the High Priest of false gods; he became a theologian and created himself a patrician.

The wise and modest Crevier remarks that, "from this arose the contests, quarrels, ruptures, at first unimportant, but, at length, ending in a deplorable schism between the Greek and Latin Churches," * and he was not wrong.

But Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus is at Rome, and, at present, we must see what use the new prefect makes of the power which has cost him so dearly.

CHAPTER XXII.

AN OFFER OF MARRIAGE.

CNAEUS Furius Nomentanus, entering Rome, trembling with emotion, excited by his peril at Sirmium, full of consternation and irritated at his ruin, still smarting keenly under the outrage of the Circus Maximus, his heart inflated with rage and desires of vengeance, had determined upon a terrible retaliation. He would seek Sotades, instigator of the affront, he would reach Aulus, whose arm had been lifted over him, he would envelop the mother, the sister, the whole family, in the formidable embraces of his resentment. Besides, was not their house a haunt of Christians, and was it not against the Christians that he had been armed with power?

Yet, amidst all these tumultuous designs, other thoughts, vaguely defined at first, afterwards pondered upon during a long journey, gradually arose in his mind, and the nearer his approach to Rome, the stronger appeared the realization of these hopes. Indeed, if past injuries clamored so furiously within him, did not the present peril, from which he had with difficulty escaped, also elevate its implacable voice, and have we really named all the objects of his hatred? For example, the Cæsar Galerius who had given him the alternative of delivering up a large portion of the treasures amassed with so much care or of being devoured by bears,

*Crevier, Hist. of the Emperors. Vol. XII, page 185.

was there not some means of avenging this wrong, and even of recovering the gold wrenched from him?

Furius was clothed with immense power, he was going to be absolute master of Rome. The Emperor Maximian lived at Milan; Galerius, animated by rage against the Christians, had, under the form of a prayer, addressed to his colleague, obtained positive orders from Diocletian that no one should interfere with the action of the new Roman prefect. Maximian, who always complied with the wishes of his childhood's friend, his ancient comrade in arms, to whom he was indebted for the imperial purple, was also, in an equal degree with Galerius, incensed against those whom he considered the most furious enemies of his power and empire. Consequently, seeing in Cnæus Furius Nomentanus a man clothed with the confidence of Galerius and Domitian, he would hinder not the new prefect's work.

But, instead of becoming their persecutor, could not this new prefect declare himself the Christians' protector? Did not this sect already enjoy enormous power? Did it not predominate in the Eternal City?

Had she not been promised to them and, for a long time, really in their possession? Would it be strange if the Christians should give themselves an Emperor? Were there not numberless examples of those sudden proclamations, which had torn the purple from imperial shoulders to clothe therewith the unknown and unworthy?

What was necessary to reach such dazzling heights? To intimidate the Christians at first, and then secretly re-assure them; to create a division in their ranks, to buy all who were willing to sell themselves, and. especially, to become one of them by espousing Aula.

Yes, Aula, whom Cnæus Furius Nomentanus would render arbiter of her own destiny, that is, of her grandeur or death, the ruin of her family or its exaltation; Aula, possessing whom, he could encircle his forehead with the imperial bandeau, for she would secure him the support of all the Christians, she would bring to his aid that invincible strength already surrounding Constantius Chlorus in the depths of Gaul, and the very thought of which made the two Emperors and the Cæsar Galerius tremble, though miles away from Rome.

When Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus, in his traveling litter, reached this climax of his dreams, so great were his transports that those who accompanied him heard, with astonishment, his involuntary exclamations of joy or savage bursts of laughter, for he already caught a glimpse of the day when it would be his turn to make Galerius sup with Tiberius and Caligula!

It was with all the insolent pride of a high public official, with all the glittering display attendant upon power, that Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus re-entered Rome and resumed possession of his patrician house in the Nomentanian way.

His first care was to have posted up throughout the city the Emperor's edict of persecution, and to choose lieutenants for the bloody work which was to begin immediately.

In every quarter of Rome he appointed judges who, charged with discovering Christians, were surrounded by executioners and instruments of torture, to diffuse terror around them, and give a public proof of his zeal in executing the imperial will.

But, at the same time, so as not to destroy, by these rigors, his ambitious plans, now matured and definitely adopted, he recommended his ministers to use some moderation, to temporize as much as possible, to employ persuasion before resorting to torture, not to use harsh measures until the last extremity, and then only against those Christians who, publicly contemning the gods or the Emperors, were guilty before the people of committing acts of false zeal or imprudent rebellion, like so many others in preceding persecutions.

As to himself, Furius had fully resolved to keep in the shade, and appear only on grand occasions (these he would prevent as much as possible), unless forced to rigor by the failure of this discreet hypocrisy upon which he relied as the means of conducting him to the dimly foreseen end of all these intoxicating dreams.

The better to assure his designs, and give them at first his utmost aid, he carried his duplicity so far as to intimate to Bishop Marcellinus, who succeeded Caius in the year 296, that he (Furius) was not an inexorable persecutor; in reality, he was favorable to the faithful, and had accepted his prefectship only to soften the consequences of the edict;

and, at the same time, he begged Marcellinus to use all his influence in restraining the Christians from any overt act, which would render necessary an immediate repression, and thus place the new prefect in a most unpleasant embarrassment. Afterwards, by means of intelligent intermediaries, who are never wanting to those in power, he caused the same assurances to be given the most influential Christians; adding, also, that he would not hesitate to place himself at their head the moment they had resolved to free themselves from the Emperor's yoke and choose a prince whose first duty would be to guarantee the free and public exercise of religion.

These overtures, made to men whose authority or credit could aid him best, Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus judged most efficacious in bringing to a happy termination his particular projects.

And, hoping to influence seriously Aula's determination by inspiring her with fear for her brother's safety, he gave orders to his agents that Aulus should be carefully sought, also this Sotades, upon whom, at all events, he would gratify a terrible revenge.

But Aulus, hunted anew by his creditors, had again disappeared from Rome and thus placed himself beyond the reach of Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus; as to Sotades, the agents, after multiplied investigations, were obliged to inform their master that it was impossible to find him.

No one, indeed, at Rome, unless, perhaps, Chaerestrate, to whom Severian's devoted care had gradually restored a spark of reason, could have told the spies and satellites of Furius that the fat man strolling incessantly along the Nomentanian way, anxiously questioning them about the new Roman prefect, and, moreover, so well known to them under the name of Ctesiphon, was that very Sotades upon the bootless search of whom they wasted so many days and nights.

Whilst expecting his fortune (of which he had not hitherto despaired) to secure him possession of his ancient master and the individual arming that master's hand with an ignominious whip, Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus turned his attention towards the house on the Salarian way, and, before taking any decisive steps, wished to apprise himself of what passed there.

His spies had no difficulty in giving him a complete history. Thus he learned that, at the first news of the persecution, this house had immediately become a retreat, where, with the utmost ardor, its inmates prepared themselves for the sufferings and glories of the combat. An old woman named Eva, a young man, Severian, inflamed all hearts.

The tears of the household, the sorrows of the broken-hearted mother, the sister's humbled pride, the disasters and ruin fallen upon this patrician house, served Severian as so many incentives to speak upon the nothingness and vanity of earthly things compared with the imperishable joys of Heaven—and Eva, to exult at thoughts of the struggle through which, with a little constancy, she would pass from the sufferings of this life to the eternal repose of the next.

Only by attentively reading "The Acts of the Martyrs" can we, at present, gain some idea of a truly Christian family during a time of persecution, and, especially, when that family contains so brilliant an example as Eva to teach the law of duty, so ardent a soul as Severian to fill all hearts with unspeakable consolation.

Let us penetrate the interior of this dwelling and, for one instant, pause upon each individual there awaiting the moment of trial.

The mother, whose wounds are still fresh and bleeding, lifts to Heaven her unspeakable gaze. She offers herself for all those her affection would shield, and begs God to strike her alone, but spare her daughter and bring Aulus back to his early faith.

Aula reveals all the enthusiasm of a pure and virgin heart. She seems to have been transformed and no longer of this world whose deceptions only she has known. She is like the flower for a moment inclined upon its stem by a rude blast of wind, but which soon rises brilliant with the purple tints of its open corolla. Her countenance is, indeed, lighted by the fires of her secret transports, and her radiant eyes, lifted proudly on high like those of her mother, seem equally lost in contemplating the celestial horizon.

Basilide represents the firmness of mature age, all the calmness and austere gravity of which she possesses. Listening attentively to Severian's inspired words, and occa-

sionally turning towards Eva, the smile of pious affection playing around her scarcely parted lips bespeaks the mute understanding of these two souls tempered to the same strength.

The young Lactorium's tears roll, in big drops, down her pale, emaciated cheeks. Softly she sighs, like the isolated dove of the desert; her delicate hands, that a piece of coarse wool could chafe, tremble involuntarily, but are extended before her as if already offered to the chains prepared by invisible executioners.

Suddenly, a great noise is heard at the doors of this house, each inmate of which is resolved, by the help of God's grace, to stand firm in the conflict marked out by His designs.

Then, tumultuous steps, followed by piercing cries, resound in the "atrium," and, immediately, an insolent, brutal soldiery invade the place where these holy women have isolated themselves to obtain from on high that strength bestowed on hearts united in one prayer.

An exclamation of joy, accompanied by another similar cry, rends the air. It is the double response of Eva and Severian to the chief commanding his legionaries to seize the old woman and young man and load them with chains. Immediately they are dragged away, whilst the weeping matrons, wishing to retain them, but unable to do so, kiss their garments and reverence the very footsteps of these two martyrs conducted before the judge.

"Courage, my sisters!" said Severian, on disappearing. "Do not weep for us; but, with us, return thanks to the Lord that we are chosen first!"

"Glory to God!" was Eva's only exclamation, as she endeavored to lift her manacled hands towards Heaven.

Then, silence fell upon this house and among the matrons, some of whom were bent in prayer, and others, like Lactorium, had fallen back completely overwhelmed.

Meanwhile, the curtain before this apartment was softly drawn aside and an old man stood upon the threshold contemplating, with a calm, and almost smiling, air, this scene of trouble and dejection.

"Oh! my uncle!" exclaimed Lactorium, who was the first to perceive and recognize him, "were you, then, with these people?"

"I! my niece, and when did you ever see me with such a rabble?"

Albinus (for it was he), respectfully saluting the other matrons, who rose at his approach, advanced towards the young girl and, taking her hand, said affectionately:

"He! he! little imprudence! the persecution has commenced and will take its course if something is not done to arrest it. My niece, well admonished, knows that her uncle Albinus swore not to come to her aid—and, yet, here he is at the very first moment of danger!"

Then, turning towards Aula Plautia Laterana, who pointed to a chair upon which he seated himself after the ladies had resumed their seats, he remained in an embarrassed silence instead of speaking, as at first he appeared desirous of doing.

Aula Plautia Laterana, wishing to put a speedy end to this state of affairs, at last said, in a grave tone:

"I am waiting, sir, to learn the motive of your presence in this sorrowful house."

"Madam, what has just taken place is unimportant and you can re-assure yourself," he hastily answered, forcing himself to counterfeit composure.

"I do not understand you, Albinus," was the simple reply of Aula Plautia Laterana, wishing, by her dignified manner, the better to express all the surprise his singular response had caused.

"The prefect of Rome knew that this dwelling was particularly compromised by the excitations of an old fool and the imprudence of a young enthusiast, consequently, he has rid you of them. Moreover, their safety, as well as yours and that of my niece, is in your hands."

"I understand you still less, Albinus," said Aula Plautia Laterana, with a haughty look, which constrained the old man once more to fix his eyes upon the ground.

"I have been assured, I believe," stammered he, "that Aula, herself, is not ignorant that a union with——"

At these words, Aula, bounding from her seat, stood trembling with anger before the old pretor. She was pale, and her lips quivered. Enveloped in the long folds of her falling robe, her right hand extended towards the curtain to inform Albinus that the moment of retreat had come, she

appeared the statue of offended Chastity, a master-piece of Grecian art on the Octavian portico, and commanding universal admiration.

"Albinus!" exclaimed she, "I did not think you weak enough to be guilty of such an outrage towards me!"

The old man stood up, as if snatched from his seat by this voice of contempt, this withering glance of patrician pride. From his shoulders, even to the wide purple fringe bordering his fine white woolen tunic and reaching to his feet, he trembled as if seized by a convulsion.

"Since," responded he, in an elevated, menacing tone, "no one here can understand the strength of authority, I, indeed, have nothing more to do, and withdraw."

And the old pretor's hasty steps gradually dying away in the distance, silence again filled this noble dwelling.

Some days after this proceeding of Albinus, Aula Plautia Laterana, her daughter Aula, Basilide, and Lactorium were all re-united with Eva and Severian in the dungeon where these last named had been cast by the proconsul Sabinus, established judge of the Christians in the Salarian way, and acting under express orders from Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus, prefect of Rome.

CHAPTER XXIII.

STILL THE HAND OF GOD.

THE proconsul Sabinus, appointed judge for the Christians in that new quarter of Rome comprising the Salarian way, had been selected by the prefect with particular care; for here dwelt the family upon whom depended the success of the prefect's secret designs; and, consequently, he was extremely guarded not to be governed entirely by caprice in choosing this lieutenant. The proconsul, then, must act in such a manner as to reserve for his chief the opportunity of proving himself, definitely, a merciless persecutor if unsuccessful in his schemes of an union with Aula, or, just the contrary, should he, at length, triumph over her refusal.

The situation of Eva and Severian had appeared singu-

larly propitious to the realization of these dark plans. Exhausting upon them all the rigors of persecution, he would inspire Aula with great compassion for these beings whom he knew held a place in her heart—at the same time, she would be terrified for herself and all her own family. Sabinus would measure his severity or mercy according to the resistance or hesitation of Aula, who, to the end, would remain supreme arbiter in the fate of all those retained, like herself, by the proconsul in that state of torment usually preceding martyrdom—her lips would decide for all, life in incomparable splendor or death amidst frightful sufferings. As to Furius, if, contrary to all expectations, it should be necessary, he would appear at the last moment, and then, amidst the mortal agonies with which she was surrounded, snatch from Aula a cry of consent. During periods of persecution how often, indeed, by their executioners' atrocious schemes, have Christians been submitted to the terrible ordeal of renouncing their Faith, or themselves condemning to a death of horrible tortures those for whom they had cheerfully shed the last drop of blood!

To the execution of these merciless orders Sabinus brought all the intelligent cruelty of an implacable hatred to Christianity, all the ardor of affected servilism and cowardice feeling itself weighed down by a formidable overseer. Whilst using great moderation towards Aula Plautia Laterana and her daughter Aula, he exhausted every barbarity in varying Eva's and Severian's tortures. Nearly every day cruel flagellations, metal blades heated in the fire, iron nails deeply driven into their flesh, tore the limbs and bodies of these two confessors of the Faith, who, at night, seldom reposed upon any other couch than the sharp fragments of broken pottery, and to all these torments was frequently added the pressure of shackles for their hands and feet already tumefied from bruises.

The noble matrons were usually witnesses of these tortures and horrors. Often they could not refrain from begging mercy for the victims; then Sabinus would immediately stop and say that it depended on themselves alone to end these rigors. Often, also, he moderated the executioners' rage and granted the two martyrs some days of respite; it was not, indeed, advisable for them to succumb prema-

turely; they must endure to break the pride of these matrons, and, at last, the hypocrisy of kind treatment must be tried in order that its perfidious policy should soften their hearts and accomplish the desired hope. But neither the old Eva nor young Severian abated in constancy. God, in His secret designs, not only accorded them strength of soul and heart, but also that strength of bodily endurance which so often redoubled against the most illustrious confessors the rage of their despairing persecutors.

Eva appeared insensible to all the cruelties of a refined barbarity, and yet her persecutors were not tormenting a corpse or a frame stupified and impassible from old age, for the spectators witnessed all the involuntary shudderings of nature, and they heard her praise God, and thank Him that He had judged her worthy of suffering for His name, and purifying her sinful body by flame and sword. Severian seemed to realize the delirium and exultation of sorrow. He not only refrained from crying out for mercy, but himself excited the executioners, and pointed out to them the most frightful instruments of torture.

At the same time; his serenity was complete; his lips murmured a perpetual hosannah, and amidst the ejaculatory prayers for his tyrants and tears for their pardon, were heard his cries of glory to God, the triumphant canticle of a being superior to suffering and already elevated to the ravishments of the elect. Both united in entreating the noble ladies witnessing these tortures to contemn the vain efforts of their persecutors' wrath; recalling only heavenly joys, they begged them not to be overcome by a miserable compassion for such transient sufferings, but also to stand firm and unmoved themselves in the hour of conflict and victory.

Never were there more beautiful examples, never words of more captivating authority, from hearts better disposed to the holy enthusiasm of martyrdom. Moreover, at these epochs of persecution, the bloody sword, the ardent furnace, the sinister irons, all the appurtenances of sorrow and agony, multiplied in every form, were so many brilliant tokens, announcing the end of evil days for humanity.

Weakness conquered strength; sweetness overcame rage; calmness silenced fury; the martyrs' hopes supported them against the executioners' impotence and discouragement; lib-

berty of soul triumphed over physical power; good stifled evil; God remained victor through the power of will and peace of His elect.

A glimpse of the heavenly palms perceived above their scaffolds or fiery beds consoled and encouraged the just, but not unmindful of this world, they in dying left it a promise of speedy regeneration and certain deliverance.

Also, their secret ardors of faith and love were communicated to all those who witnessed their sufferings.

With loud supplications, their Christian brethren begged the privilege of dying near them, and often the tormentors declared themselves ready to undergo the punishments they had just inflicted.

After some days, the proconsul Sabinus, confessing himself vanquished, was obliged to inform Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus that if he hoped for success, the moment had now arrived when the last, supreme effort must be made.

The old woman Eva had but a spark of life; Severian seemed no longer able to recover.

The matrons were more and more exultant, instead of being conquered; at last they implored their judge to let them share the fate of his other victims.

At this bad omen, the Roman prefect chafed with impatience, but did not despair.

The last sufferings of Eva and Severian, amidst the most cruel agonies, the ignominies of public torture for her mother, her two friends and herself, the sight of death, present, frightful, inevitable, would finally overcome Aula's resistance, and cause her to fall on her knees before him, on whose will alone was suspended their thread of life.

The day, then, was appointed when, in open Forum, the prefect would mount his tribunal, and himself try the case of these invincible Christians.

Meanwhile, he commanded Sabinus not only to cease all harsh measures against Eva and Severian, but also to resuscitate them by kind treatment, so as to keep them alive till the last moment, the new tortures of the decisive trial.

Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus resolved at the same time that no pains should be spared to surround this "question" *

* This is the exact word. At Rome, every criminal tried, either by special tribunal or special magistrate was called "a question."

with extraordinary notoriety. He indeed wished that this, his first official appearance in public, should be attended with all the display belonging to his high position. It would, moreover, afford the best manifestation of his zeal against the Christians; for if, despite all efforts, Aula remained intractable, nothing more was to be done but execute the Emperor's edicts, and he ought not to refrain from delighting Galerius by showing himself one of the most formidable persecutors.

An immense crowd filled the Forum the day Furius ascended the elevated seat from whence he reigned over all this tumultuous crowd. Armed legionaries surrounded the tribunal, the executioners were at their post, their instruments of torture already prepared; and an ignoble populace closed its ranks around the circle left free for the consummation of such orders as the initiated judge might give.

Pity had no share in the feelings of this throng, motionless from expectation; and yet it could have been remarked, how the the terrified glances rested upon these burning coals, these irons, whitened in the fire, and casting off sparks, these monstrous preparations of violence, armed against the soul, brutality wishing to stifle belief—and faint murmurs burst forth from a few lips.

Christianity in possession of Rome for nearly three centuries had already accomplished a part of its work. It had not yet enlightened all minds, or vanquished all hearts, but it had filled the masses with those vague sentiments inspiring respect, and those faintly defined aspirations which are the commencement of grand transformations. *

Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus, surprised at these murmurs, cast upon the crowd an angry, threatening glance. Suddenly his countenance assumed a fearful pallor.

He had recognized, at the distant boundary of the crowd, Ctesiphon supporting Chaerestrate, that old man who had been the constant terror of his nightly visions, the spectre ever present to his imagination! Just as he was about to give orders for the instant arrest of these two men, the crowd

*History attests that the attempt at persecution in 298 was instantly stifled at Rome, and the grand persecution commenced in the month of February, 303, was hardly carried on, except in the provinces.

drew back, and, guarded by soldiers, the four matrons were conducted before their judge. They were loaded with chains, and their hands tied behind them, but confidently they walked together, raising their calm voices to heaven in canticles of joy.

A great clamor arose from the expectant multitude, touched by the venerable age of Aula Plautia Laterana, the imposing beauty of Aula, the dignity of Basilide, the graces of Lactorium; and recognizing in them daughters of families still dear to the people, and whose ancient glories were held in grateful remembrance. An echoing cry was heard, and a hand extended towards Cnæus Furius Nomentanus pointed him out to the multitude.

"Behold," said the voice, "behold the slave who is going to judge his mistress!"

The prefect of Rome responded by a furious order against Ctesiphon, but the same hand was still extended, and the same voice cried out:

"And behold the brother who is going to judge his brother!"

The terrified crowd recoiled. Cnæus Furius Nomentanus himself, apparently seized with a stupor, sat motionless.

Pushed by two soldiers, Severian, bruised by torture, advanced towards the tribunal. One could have said it was the judge, who had descended from his curule chair and placed himself among the victims. The same age, the same height, the same countenance, the same pallor, only the pallor of one had its source in suffering, of the other in fright and consternation.

The two brothers recognized each other. Having passed ten years of their infancy together, their astonishing resemblance had never been forgotten by either. Severian lifted his angelic glance towards the brother he saw again after so long a separation; but this glance, full of pardon, met in return from Furius only the savage gaze of an enraged persecutor.

Meanwhile the Forum trembled as if all the surrounding monuments had been snatched from their foundations, and yet so universal was the silence, that the faintest whisper could be heard.

An old, white-haired woman, scarcely able to sustain her

tottering frame, had at this moment ascended the steps of the tribunal, and stood facing the prefect of the city.

She had been brought on a barrow to the Forum, but at one glimpse of the prefect, uttering a loud cry, she immediately rose up and walked!

She, also, remembered her children's striking resemblance, and had often thought it impossible for such a likeness ever to be re-produced, except in beings of the same parents.

But now so identical in appearance were the two young men, one of whom was going to be her executioner, the other her companion in martyrdom, that she could not doubt but that God at this last moment had placed before her the two sons, snatched from her arms by Chaerestrate, on that night of sorrowful memory!

Moreover, there was a sign, an infallible sign, in which she could not be mistaken. Taking the hand of Severian, and looking earnestly into his eyes, she regarded him for some instants with tenderness and infinite joy.

The night this young man, in the name of Agatho, first entered the house on the Salarian way, Eva had felt herself overcome by his glance, and had been obliged to rest her trembling body against a pillar for support, but he was not then near his brother, and in thirty years the features of manhood had replaced those of infancy.

With the same attention did she examine the countenance of Furius; and the multitude, apparently comprehending all that was solemn and terrible in this mute contemplation, shuddered already at the emotion agitating this weak and almost lifeless old woman.

"Yes, I am thy mother, as he is my son!" said she at last, in a firm voice, heard by all around, "I recognize thee by that flame of hell which gleams in thy eyes, as I have recognized him by the ray of heaven beaming in his. Thou art truly the wolf and he the lamb!—but thou shalt no longer attack him. I am still here to defend him! Take me alone! Finish upon thy mother what thou hast commenced! I pardon thee!"

But Furius listened not; he dreamed only of flight.

When the attentive multitude caught these words, "I am thy mother," from every side of the Forum arose such a deafening clamor that Eva's voice was drowned.

In an instant, the soldiers and executioners had been dispersed, the fires extinguished, the instruments of torture destroyed, the noble ladies delivered from their fetters, and Furius himself threatened by thousands of arms extended to seize him.

But suddenly this fury gave way to respect and compassion, for Eva, throwing herself between the crowd and Furius, cried in a supplicating tone:

"Spare him!"

Then, completely exhausted, she fell fainting upon Severian's knees, and the multitude saw that it was the commencement of a calm and almost insensible death agony.

Furius dreamed only of profiting by this respite, which compassion for the holy martyr's last moments had excited; already had he made some steps towards escape, when suddenly a cord was cast around his neck, and an ironical voice uttered these words of the law: "I call thee to justice, to be sold again as a fugitive serf. Follow me to the tribunal!" *

Dismayed, he turned round, and found himself facing Ctesiphon.

"I am that Sotades thou hast so diligently sought!" declared the latter, still in a tone of mercilless sarcasm. "And behold Chaerestrate!"

At the sound of these two names, Eva started and betrayed some signs of life. Opening her eyes, heavy with the languor of death, and fixing them slowly upon the persons just named, who stood looking at her, the one in tears, the other with an idiotic stare, she recognized them; then, making a last effort to recover herself and give some strength to her expiring voice, she exclaimed:

"Sotades! Sotades! pardon Selene, as Selene pardons Chaerestrate! And be merciful to my son!"

Sotades, detaching the cord from the neck of Furius, knelt down by the side of Eva, and taking her hand, kissed it piously.

"Selene," said he, with tearful eyes, "it is a long time since Sotades pardoned thee!"

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*The Law of the Twelve Tables exacted the pronouncing of these solemn words. It added, that in case of an attempt at flight, the person summoned could be conducted to justice obtorto collo.

He then felt the hand within his own grow stiff, and after one last convulsive movement, the body of the martyr became motionless.

"Glory to God! Glory to His elect!" cried Severian.

This triumphant cry was repeated by the four matrons, who, bending over Eva, placed their lips upon her still bloody wounds.

Severian had fallen on his knees. Contemplating the features (radiant in death) of her who had been his mother, he lifted his hands to Heaven and thanked God.

Then stooping down, he kissed her forehead, and with one finger on her eyelids, gently closed them.

Rising, he took in his arms the body, still warm, descended the steps of the tribunal, and followed by the matrons crossed the Forum towards the Salarian way.

So firm was his step as he carried this precious burden that no one would have thought his own body wounded and bruised by tortures.

Chaerestrate, who had recognized Severian, walked beside him.

Sotades, sad and pensive, accompanied the pious cortege.

As to Furius, he had disappeared the moment the cord was taken from his neck.

EPILOGUE.

FIFTEEN years later, in that estate in Spain already known to our readers, a woman, still young and charming, read most attentively under the shade of the great trees beneath which she had stopped a document of some length, just given her by a messenger.

On finishing, she gave a long sigh of relief, raised to heaven a look full of grateful joy, and then knelt down to pray.

Afterwards casting a rapid glance towards the narrow path leading to Agatho's grotto, and perceiving afar off a little group descending, she immediately ran to meet them, waving above her head the sheet of papyrus, filling the air with triumphant cries, although well aware that these manifestations of joy could not be seen or heard by the individuals for whom they were intended.

When she had drawn nearer the party, they hastened their steps, and two little children, whom she almost stifled with caresses and tearful kisses, ran to cast themselves in her arms.

Then again waving the sheet of papyrus, she cried out:

"Good news, Aulus! The persecution is ended, peace is restored to the Church! Here is the edict of Licinius."*

And again pressing her children to her heart:

"Oh my God!" said she, "I shall now have nothing more to fear for Aulus and these dear little ones!"

Meanwhile, Aulus, beside whom walked Aula, having reached the young woman, said:

"Good news, indeed, dear Lactorium, if true. And who has brought this message?"

"Osius, whose letter accompanies the copy of the edict. You will see that it is beyond doubt. The Emperor Con-

*Published at Nicomedia, June 13th, 313. The Church at Nicomedia was destroyed February 23d, 303, consequently the great persecution beginning then, and ending June 13th, 313, lasted ten years, three months and nineteen days.

stantine himself remitted this document to our venerable Bishop, who in turn hastened to direct it to us."*

By this simple scene, which we shall not continue further, we see that Laetorium was happy in recovering Aulus, father of the two children, who still wiped away the tears of joy with which their fresh little faces had been bedewed.

This reformation of Aulus was one of Severian's works. After the ordeal in 298, the whole Plautia family abandoning Rome, took refuge in Spain; Constantius Chlorus, who was favorable to Christianity, having restored their Spanish estates, upon which, sheltered from persecution, they lived during the long trial afflicting the Church.

Severian had also left Rome, but had repaired to those countries most threatened by the tyrant's fury. We know not how he escaped the martyr's crown, for he was constantly near the Confessors of the Faith, and orders had frequently been given for his arrest.

It was during these travels he had met Aulus; recounting to him what had passed at Rome, the danger which his mother and sister had escaped only by a miracle of God. Aulus, heartily ashamed and touched with repentance, had blushed at his past life, and bravely attaching himself to Severian, succored with all his strength and energy their persecuted brethren.

In accompanying Aulus back to Spain, Severian could tell Plautia that her son was now truly worthy of her; and Agatho completed the measure of the mother's and sister's joy by declaring to them that Laetorium, who lived with them afar from her uncle Albinus, would not repulse the Christian whose dark past had been effaced by bitter regret and noble deeds.

Aula Plautia Laterana died a short time after this marriage, which God had doubtless reserved as the crowning happiness of her old age; and Agatho, full of days, was not long in following her to eternal rest. Basilide remained at Rome, where she continues to live.

* Constantine, after his victory over Maxentius, desiring to be fully instructed in the Christian faith, had sent for Osius, Bishop of Cordova. We must here mention that Osius, venerated for his great learning and virtue, had not then fallen into those errors so strongly savoring of Arianism. Before his death he returned to the Church, in the communion of which he died, at the advanced age of more than a hundred years.

Ctesiphon wished to see Greece, "his beautiful country," where he died tranquilly at Thebes, in the house once belonging to Chaerestrate, which he had bought as a memento of Selene.

It has been a long time since the ancient slave-dealer returned to dust, dispersed we know not where.

Here is what happened to Furius:

The Emperor Maximian wrote to the Caesar Galerius that the Prefect of Rome was but a miserable wretch, who had caused the failure of the persecution.

Galerius simply responded:

"Send him to me."

So Cnaeus Furius Nomentanus, under a strong escort, conducted anew to Sirmium, indeed supped with Tiberius and Caligula.

At the period when this story closes, Severian had been with Agatho a few months, taking a little repose after his fatiguing journeys, and recruiting his strength to resume the traveler's staff placed in his hands by the old solitary.

Aula, her brother and the two children had just returned from a visit to Agatho's grotto, and Lactorium had started to meet them, when a messenger arriving with the edict of Licinius, had filled all hearts with joy.

Thus of all the personages introduced in this story, there now remains (with the exception of Severian and the virgin Basilide) but one pious, affectionate family, bearing in mind the noble example given by a mother and simple servant, and having undergone sorrowful trials, the memory of which inspires their children's respect.

And this was not one of the least effects of the persecutions.

They proved the most brilliant affirmation of the Christian truth.

They were the first demonstration of spiritual liberty. And by the ardors of the same faith, participation of the same perils, honors of the same combats, and glories of the same contempt, for those who remain have they furnished causes of veneration and tenderness, which, transmitted to posterity, shall never be forgotten.

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The money god

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